

Vestry Minutes
March 21, 2007

Present: The Rev'd Jennifer Pedrick, the Rev'd Richard Shippee, the Rev'd Scott Gunn, Richard Messier, Mike Seger, Shirley Baker, Steve McGrath, Susan Hawryluk, Carolyn McDonough, George Kolb, Marilyn Fuller, Bonnie Wright, Michelle Callahan, Bob Bergstrand, and Tammi Miller

Absent: Bill Dench

Guests: none

At 7:09 PM, the Rev'd Jennifer Pedrick opened the meeting with a centering activity and a prayer.

Part I - continuation of discussion of article "How to Minister Effectively in Family, Pastoral, Program, and Corporate sized Churches" from the Congregational Resource Guide

The Rev'd Pedrick first reviewed the aforementioned article, which discussed four sizes of churches. For our purposes, three were discussed as to their size and the role of clergy and lay leaders in each. In brief, they were:

- Family (~50 active members), where clergy engages in pastoral care and worship duties.
- Pastoral (50-150 members), where clergy are constantly available and are the center of most activities.
- Program-sized (150-300 members), where autonomous "cells" of activity are led by lay leaders, who provide structure and pastoral care, while clergy engage in planning & program development and offer pastoral care primarily to the lay leaders.

The Rev'd Pedrick then revisited last meeting's exercise where members stated which of two functions they would rather have clergy perform. During tonight's meeting, she added votes of those who were absent last meeting and included the clergy's votes. As part of this exercise, Michelle Callahan noted that lay leaders could do hospital/shut-in visits. Susan Hawryluk added that the vestry members more often chose pastoral care activities for the clergy to perform than development activities. George Kolb stated we need to "change our paradigm" and to think of previously-called "administrative" clergy tasks as "visionary" and "growth-oriented" tasks. Marilyn Fuller questioned whether we would need to hire a separate program/ministry leader in future. The Rev'd Pedrick summed up by saying she herself has had to shift her thinking and not be guilty about "letting go a bit for everyone's good."

The Rev'd Pedrick then asked the vestry and clergy to name the sizes of churches with which they'd had experience. All had experience in a program-sized church. Michelle related that in program-size church, even though clergy may change, the programs and people remain the same and carry on though the lay leaders, making things "healthier for the church." Carolyn McDonough added that that creates a rich diversity in the church, making more opportunities available.

The Rev'd Pedrick noted that we've had a number of well-attended Sundays, but for the growth to continue, all parishioners, especially vestry members, need to make choices.

“There’s things you can’t have (in program sized-churches),” she said, such as not knowing everyone and not seeing clergy at every meeting. Carolyn added that “we as vestry do want to grow, but with depth.” But without these and other changes, we cannot grow and may become stagnant. As an example of changes that may be needed, the Rev’d Pedrick brought up the need for finance and building/grounds sub-committees within the vestry due to the demands of our growth. Both she and Bill Dench are currently working on an updated organizational chart to illustrate needs and changes already happening. The Rev’d Pedrick added that we will need to share responsibility and that this may not be comfortable. Marilyn capped the discussion by saying, “It’s good to be uncomfortable, because you then leave your comfort zone and grow.”

Part II - Business meeting

Marilyn Fuller moved that the minutes of the February 22, 2007 be accepted as presented. Bonnie Wright seconded the motion. Steve McGrath submitted a correction, as at the end of the 2/22 meeting, it was Mike Seger who submitted a note from Al Hutchinson, not he. The motion then passed unanimously.

Treasurer’s Time was tabled for this meeting, as Bill Dench was unable to attend.

Merger Update - Richard Messier reported that St. Gabriel’s Aramaic Church has made an offer on the former St. Martin’s parcel. However, it was well below the asking price. They then submitted a bid excluding the rectory, also well below asking price. A fee for Sunday use only in the interim was also offered. Also, he has spoken with a party who is interested in the rectory only and who would like to do a walk-through. He later added that whoever buys the church will be responsible for any fire code upgrades as of January 2008.

The Rev’d Pedrick then referenced an e-mail from attorney Jim Hahn, stating the property was originally donated to the former St. Martin’s parish for use as a church. The aforementioned e-mail from Atty. Hahn stated that “the only way to eliminate it is through a court hearing, joining the Attorney General as a representative of the people.” After meeting with the Attorney General’s office, Atty. Hahn said there were no objections based on the initial review. Furthermore, it may be possible to notify the heirs of the donor by published notice of the hearing, rather than actually trying to find any heirs. However, the title company has not yet approved this. Overall, Atty. Hahn wrote that there would probably be a two-month window before any court order could be issued to clear the title.

Steve McGrath stated there are a number of title issues to be resolved if it is to be used in any other function. However, if the Attorney General ruled in favor of clearing the title, it may allow a sale more in line with the market value of the property. He stated the higher value of the property may be in some sort of conversion, and that it may be better to engage a commercial real estate agent who would have more of an eye towards conversion potential. Richard Messier asked what effect the lease with the YMCA would have on a commercial sale. Steve stated it would be common practice in such a deal for the buyer to buy out the remainder of the lease, which runs through June 2009 in this case. Michelle Callahan voiced concern over the idea that the former St. Martin’s church would not remain a church and the implications a commercial buyer could bring to the property.

The Rev'd Pedrick then moved to reject the St. Gabriel's offer, Steve McGrath seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The Rev'd Pedrick related that the Vestry Executive Committee discussed appointing a subgroup to reject and/or counter offers in the future, so that a potential buyer would not have to wait a month for a decision. In the event of an acceptable bid, an emergency vestry meeting would be called.

Bob Bergstrand then emphasized the need to make a counter offer "to keep the door open" and moved that a "substantial" counter offer be made. Susan Hawryluk seconded the motion. In discussing the motion, Richard Messier voiced concern that such a large counter offer could push buyers away, especially since this is the only group showing interest at this time. Steve McGrath reiterated that we haven't worked with a commercial real estate agent yet, so we don't know what other options may open to us. Mike Seger also stated that a large counter may cause the bidders to back out, while a more moderate counter may keep them interested. Steve suggested, rather than countering the offer, we should explain that we're now re-evaluating what to do with the property and that we will keep in touch with them. Marilyn reminded everyone that we are dealing with "concrete and emotional factors" in selling the former St. Martin's, and that "God's gift of that income" must be carefully obtained and then used.

Bob Bergstrand then offered to withdraw his motion. The Rev'd Gunn agreed that the "door needs to stay open", and that we can say their offer was not enough, but that we're not sure at this point what would indeed be enough. Therefore, he stated we need a smaller group to handle offers and that we need a commercial real estate agent who would be aware that our preference is for the property to remain a church.

Bob Bergstrand then withdrew his motion. Susan Hawryluk then moved that Steve McGrath, Richard Messier, Bill Dench, and Marilyn Fuller be appointed the property subgroup to deal with issues such as the title, offers, and engaging a real estate agent. Marilyn Fuller seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Coffee and Conversation update - The latest "Coffee and Conversation" meeting was held on March 3, 2007. The discussion will be summarized in the upcoming "Herald" newsletter. Items of note were the fact that choir members could not also attend adult education, though no immediate solution was proposed. Also, there had been a misunderstanding resulting in the belief that members could join ministries only four times per year. Anyone can join at any time, but the schedules are generated only four times per year. The Rev'd Pedrick noted that there was a good mix of ages and length of membership at the meeting, and that there were "lots of teachable moments" for people to learn about our mission and others' concerns and ideas. Marilyn Fuller suggested that the next session not be held at 9:15, and that perhaps noon would be a better time.

St. Martin's vestry - As a matter of proper meeting etiquette, there may be times when the Church of the Epiphany vestry may have to adjourn and then reconvene as the St. Martin's vestry. This is because Church of the Epiphany is the sole member of St. Martin's for business purposes.

Banking - The main checking account has officially changed, and checks made out to

“Church of the Epiphany” can be deposited from here on out.

Rector's Time-The Rev'd Jennifer Pedrick

The Rev'd Pedrick reminded all that Holy Week is fast approaching, “a singular week in the life of a liturgical church.” Vestry members were especially encouraged to attend services, especially the Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Solemn Vigil of Easter). She continued to say that the church will probably be overfilled on Easter Sunday, and that the service will be simulcast in the parish hall with video and sound. The Vestry was asked to help as extra ushers and greeters to help with the crowd and to help in guiding those in the hall back into the church for communion. The Rev'd Pedrick also suggested that parishioners consider attending 8:00 service on Easter, as there will be full music and choir at 8:00 that day. Also, if parishioners attend the Vigil service, they can consider that their Easter obligation and may not attend Sunday. Michelle Callahan noted the need for handicapped seating in the church and the Rev'd Pedrick stated that ushers would need to make space as needed. She hoped that as leaders, Vestry members would be so kind as to sit in the hall so as to make room for other parishioners and visitors on Easter.

The Rev'd Pedrick moved that the loose offerings on Good Friday be donated to the Anglican Church in Jerusalem, as in previous years. Marilyn Fuller seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

The Rev'd Pedrick announced April 27 and 28 as the dates for a stay-over Vestry retreat. The Bergstrands have offered their home in Little Compton as a meeting and lodging space, and other accommodations are available in the area. Investigation into exactly which lodgings will be used, and the cost to members, is forthcoming. A consultant on congregational development will be part of the meeting.

A Leadership Development Dinner series will occur during April and May at the Rectory. These dinners will be a way to invite potential new lay leaders to come together and discuss their spiritual lives and their hopes for our church community.

A Leaders Retreat, for leaders of all groups, will take place on May 12, 9am to 12pm. This will be a chance to talk about the ongoing transition, share information, discuss changes needed as our church size changes, and other issues.

The Rev'd Pedrick concluded by saying she will be on vacation from March 23 through March 31.

Assistant's Time - the Rev'd Scott Gunn

The Rev'd Gunn discussed the recent growth and explained that since Nov. 1, 2006, we have welcomed about 70 new people. At least 50 of those people remain active to some degree today. He said he regularly contacts anyone who fills out the welcome cards in the pews to discuss any questions, new people's views of our parish, and reasons for coming to us. The Rev'd Gunn said he saw no one theme as to why people choose us, though the web site, new sign, and being invited by friends were common answers. However, the reason they come back again is because “we are open to who they are and were genuinely welcoming “ to them. Therefore, there is now a need to manage newcomer incorporation as a process to help track growth. The Rev'd Gunn and Linda LeBreux will be hosting “newcomer

meetings” to talk to new members about what membership here means participation in giving and parish groups, etc.

Susan Hawryluk presented a question posed by her daughter, Abby. If someone was baptized elsewhere, should they sign the membership book? The Rev’d Gunn offered a resounding yes, and stated that baptized Christians should sign the book to become an official member of Church of the Epiphany.

Regarding a third service, the Rev’d Gunn related two main reasons for starting a third service. First, the current two services are crowded, and research shows that people will stop coming to church if they are uncomfortable. Second, the current services may not work for everyone in the greater community. For example, the type of music, “church” language, and style of service may not appeal to some. The Rev’d Gunn is currently investigating creating an alternative service which may have a flexible seating arrangement, different types of music, etc. This music may be overseen by a separate part-time person paid through the music gift, as Laura Brion is not able to coordinate a third service at this time for many reasons. The Rev’d Gunn does have a potential candidate in mind. The time of this service may be Sunday evening at 5p.m. First, this differentiates from the Roman Catholic tradition of a Saturday evening mass and keeps Sunday as the Lord’s Day. Also, families and people who may go away on weekends may attend a service later on Sunday. The Rev’d Gunn also stated that this trial service (which will continue over time only if it is self-sustaining financially), is not only for the convenience and interest of current parishioners, but is also meant to draw in people who are not yet here who may see appeal in a different type of “church”. The service may begin to be offered in September.

The Rev’d Shippee added that he felt the transition between parishes had gone “amazingly well”, and that he felt almost everyone had transferred from St. Martin’s. After his departure, however, “the bottom may drop out a bit”, and a concerted effort must be made to continue welcoming and solidifying new bonds with the former St. Martin’s parishioners.

Senior Warden - Marilyn Fuller

Marilyn Fuller gave an update on the Master Key audit. At this time, 39 outside keys, 21 inside keys, and 4 office keys have been identified. From now on, Beth Dench will keep a spread sheet to track the keys.

Marilyn Fuller also presented a letter drafted to inform parishioners of a fundraising campaign to replace and improve the kitchen and stove. Bob Bergstrand added that the memorial gift mentioned in the letter is open-ended. The deadline for donations will be April 29, and the letter will appear in the “Herald” and will be direct mailed to parishioners.

Buildings and Grounds - Bob Bergstrand

Bob Bergstrand presented a packet of three active bids for the stove replacement and accompanying upgrades. Of those bids, the “most viable” was one by Jacob Licht which included a five-foot stove and all accompanying work, except plumbing. This vendor also comes recommended by Grace Church in North Attleboro, which recently completed a kitchen upgrade. Mike Seger moved that Bob proceed in selecting that bid, Steve McGrath seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Bob also addressed the sound system needs. A representative from Bose will be coming to talk to clergy on March 28th to determine our needs. The Rev'd Pedrick also has a flyer from another potential company.

During a recent storm, a significant leak occurred in the sacristy. A contract set up last year with a roofer did not include the sacristy roof, though at the time it was thought that it did. There seems to have been miscommunication with the roofer. Currently, the roof is spongy and the seams have separated. Steve McGrath asked whether we need to make an insurance claim for water damage, but Bob stated it was not necessary at this time. In the interim, proactive protection of the items and woodwork in the room may be necessary if advance notice of a heavy rain occurs.

Upcoming fire code revisions have been released. The Diocese says parishes are responsible for calling their local fire departments to get inspected. However, when the East Providence Fire Department was called, they stated they have not even completed inspections of their schools, so churches won't be done until June or July at the earliest.

New Business

Steve McGrath has completed a review of all insurance policies and all is in order. Optional terrorism coverage was rejected.

At 9:20 p.m. the meeting adjourned with a prayer from the Rev'd Pedrick.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammi Miller
Vestry Clerk