

## R.E. Lee Memorial Episcopal Church

### Vestry Meeting - December 19, 2016

#### Minutes (updated draft, January 11, 2017)

The regular meeting of the Vestry of R.E. Lee Memorial Episcopal Church was held on Monday, December 19, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. in the College Room in the Parish House.

**Present:** Vestry Members: George Brooke, The Rev. Tom Crittenden, Susan Cross, Doug Cumming, Carole Elmore, Keith Gibson, Julia Grossman, Elizabeth Knapp, Susan Lawrence, Sharon Massie (Program Director), Holt Merchant, Grigg Mullen (Junior Warden), Woody Sadler (Senior Warden), Don Whittington, Daniel Wubah; **Vestry Members-Elect:** Merce Brooke, Buster Lewis, Lynn Dent, and Anne Hansen, **Guest:** Megan Hess (Chair, Finance Committee)

**Opening:** Woody opened the meeting with the prayer written by the Reference Team/Discovery and Discernment Committee (text is provided below). The team has encouraged the prayer's use at Vestry, committee meetings, and regular meetings of church groups.

*"Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with us as we seek to renew the mission of your Church as Christ's mission, working through us in all that we do. Teach us to seek first your wisdom and glory. Guide us to perceive what is your will, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

**Approval of November minutes:** Minutes of the November Vestry meeting were approved as distributed.

**Anne Grizzle Ordination:** Tom introduced Ann Grizzle, noting that she has completed the formation process and is now moving into the Deaconate stage. Since she has been active in formal and informal ministry over many years, the Bishop approved a two-year program at Sewanee College, including eight canonical courses, rather than a more extensive Master's program. Anne will complete this program in June. In addition to her work at Sewanee, Anne described her supervised ministry at Trinity, Staunton which provided a variety of activities to learn from another church. Because the diocese has a number of rural churches, the Bishop asked her to serve at Ascension in Amherst. Anne described the remarkable energy in this small congregation that supports outreach, and seeks to find where the spirit is alive and how to keep it going. Anne further described her chaplaincy at a Virginia hospital. She plans to take general ordination exams in two weeks, and has not yet received her deaconate assignment

Vestry members signed the form certifying their approval for Anne to continue to the deaconate.

**Capital Campaign:** Woody reported that the capital campaign kicked off with elevator rides on Sunday, and that this was a very positive event. Campaign "Askers" are continuing to meet with parishioners. \$520,000 has been pledged to date, including \$270,000 from the Mason Trust. That trust, gifts restricted to the elevator, and unrestricted gifts will be applied to the elevator until the cost is covered. At this point, we are short for what we need for the elevator, so will need to take out a loan of \$125,000. Thermometers will be posted to keep track of campaign progress. Woody thanked Doug for his good work on the blog, noting that it is generating excitement for the projects. Sharon suggested moving refreshments after both Sunday services to the Undercroft so parishioners can see how the space is being used. Woody also thanked Tom Gosse for his work keeping track of contributions and coordinating writing of Thank You notes.

**Organ Purchase Update:** Ted distributed copies of a letter he has written (attached) that addressed some of the questions that have been raised about the organ component of the capital campaign. The letter provides an overview, including the groundwork laid by the previous Music Director, Daniel Brinson and the Organ Committee, mechanical problems with the current organ, and work with organ consultants leading to the committee's recommendation to purchase a new pipe organ rather than continue to make repairs on a failing

organ or purchase a digital organ. Ted noted that the original quoted price goes up automatically 3-4% every year, starting next February to adjust for the increase in cost of materials. He also explained that the committee's recommendation for a pipe organ was based on an investment in the future, since technology advances would likely require replacing a digital organ at least three or four times during the one-hundred year projected lifetime of the pipe organ. The Organ Committee wanted to engage a builder with a reputation for longevity. The first instrument built by the firm selected is still in operation. Buster added that, as a member of the committee, he could report committee's agreement on selecting a practical organ model suitable for worship, not an extravagant concert instrument.

### **Committee Reports:**

**Finance Committee:** Megan Hess, Finance Committee Chair, presented a draft budget prepared by the committee. She noted several factors that complicated the process. Draw on the endowment is down due to the five-year rolling average, and costs continue to increase. Although we have done quite well in controlling costs, the challenge is that revenues do not cover them. Nevertheless, the Finance Committee's sense was that this is not the time to make more personnel cuts. The hope is that the decline is temporary, and that pledges will ultimately cover the projected loss. Thus, the proposed budget not balanced, but aspirational. Megan distributed a handout showing a summary level view putting spending in the context of major "buckets" that more accurately describes where revenues are being spent. She will return in January with a year-end review. Since expenses came in lower than expected, we may have a \$10,000 carryover, and have a reserve of \$17,000. We can pay our bills, but need to anticipate trends now and think about how we will structure our staff and programs down the road. In terms of outreach, Megan discovered that we had not spent all funds restricted to outreach on that category last year, so more is available for spending this year.

**The Vestry unanimously approved the draft budget.**

**Stewardship:** Doug reported that the pledge total is now \$386,000, with close to 170 pledging units, approximately ten short of last year's. In addition, there was a \$1200 contribution for the Kendal bus and \$1800 to the Mission Emergency Fund. Tom expressed confidence that we will be close to a balanced budget when all pledges are in.

**Construction:** Grigg reported that there will be a punchlist meeting with contractor on Tuesday morning, and that the temporary ramp will be removed this week. The Property Committee has discussed installing a permanent ramp at that location for emergency evacuation purposes

**Discovery and Discernment Committee:** Keith reported that committee updates are posted on the blog site. The committee is in the process of assembling data from meetings with twelve groups, attended by approximately one hundred parishioners over a two-month period. The data is being categorized-based on the eight questions that were asked in the meetings. The facilitators, Barbara Robbins and James Isaacs, will present the draft report at the Vestry's retreat in January. Woody expressed the hope that goals and a timeline will follow from the report. The retreat will be Phase I. In response to an inquiry about including outgoing Vestry members in the retreat discussion of the draft report, Keith observed that their participation would provide a good opportunity for discussion, and that he would communicate with the committee via email to confirm the invitation. **Tom will send the retreat agenda to the Vestry.**

### **Old Business;**

**New Wardens:** In lieu of a report from the Nominating Committee for Vestry officers, Tom announced that there are two candidates for Senior Warden and two for Junior Warden. There will be time for reflection and discussion before the vote at the January retreat. Nominations can also be taken from the floor at that time.

### **New Business:**

**Financial Secretary:** Tom announced that Cindy Irby has taken a full-time position at W&L, but will stay on until the new financial secretary is hired. Tom will soon be interviewing a highly qualified CPA who is

interested in part-time work, and recommended by Megan Hess. He hopes to have a new hire in place by early January to start off the year

**2017 Diocesan Pledge:** The Diocesan pledge for 2017 is 10% of our operating budget, approved as a line item in the budget passed earlier in the meeting.

**Gadsden Committee Appointment by Vestry:** Several nominations were made for the Vestry's appointment to the Gadsden Committee. Final nominations and voting will take place at the January Vestry Retreat. The next Gadsden Committee meeting is in March, 2017.

**Suggestion Box:** Julia reported no suggestions in the past month, and that Susan Lawrence has agreed to take over this responsibility when Julia rotates off at the end of this year.

**Program Director:** Sharon will provide a report at the Vestry retreat

**Comments by the Wardens:** Woody thanked outgoing Vestry member and asked about venue preferences for future Vestry meetings. The consensus was to continue meeting in the College Room for the time being.

**Comments by the Rector:**

Tom also thanked outgoing Vestry members, reminded everyone of the Annual Parish meeting on February 12 and invited sharing of pastoral concerns.

Vestry Retreat – Tom has received confirmation of 100% attendance at the retreat. He encouraged staying overnight. Catherine will assist him in coordinating dinner arrangements.

Choir trip to England – Discussion continued on Tom's request last month for the Vestry's guidance on possible use of his Continuing Education funds to accompany the choir to England as clergy for services next summer. The fund now has approximately \$2800. Estimated cost of the England trip is \$2000. Tom reported a valuable experience joining a choir in England, interacting with clergy and church leaders while he was a newly ordained clergy. Although it was formative at the time, he is at a different place in his ministry now. Tom is also interested in attending the week-long Festival of Homiletics in San Antonio in May, which he has found an inspiring and uplifting experience in the past, but the cost does not allow him attending annually. Available funding requires choosing between these activities this year. **The motion by Woody, seconded by Catherine, that Tom should make the decision, passed unanimously.**

**Closing prayer:** Julia offered the closing prayer for outgoing and incoming members

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 6:40.

**Next Meeting:** Vestry Retreat, January 13 and 14, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,  
Anna Crockett