

Vestry Meeting Minutes

R.E. Lee Memorial Episcopal Church

November 16, 2015 (approved)

The regular meeting of the Vestry of R.E. Lee Memorial Church was held on Monday, November 16, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall of the church.

In Attendance: George Brooke, John Burlison (Junior Warden), Susan Cross, Tom Crittenden (Rector), Doug Cumming, Carole Elmore, Jim Farrar (Senior Warden), Julia Grossman, Amy Holston, Diana Kenney, Elizabeth Knapp, Holt Merchant, Frank Settle, Don Whittington, Daniel Wubah; Anna Crockett (Clerk).

Absent: Grigg Mullen. **Vestry-Elect Members:** Keith Gibson, Catherine Harcus, Woody Sadler and Susan Lawrence; **Guests:** Sharon Massie (Program Director) and parishioners.

Opening: Tom opened the meeting noting current prayer concerns.

Approval of October Minutes: Minutes of the October meeting were accepted as published.

Committee Reports:

Finance Committee: Don reported pledge support down approximately \$20,000 on the revenue side and nothing noteworthy in expenses. A draft Investment Policy will be finalized and presented to the Vestry at its December meeting. Related to the preliminary 2016 budget discussions, the committee supported a 2% bonus for staff, but not the requested increases in the Youth and Program budgets. The committee discussed potential savings in reducing the frequency in publication of the Cross and Crown to every other month or quarterly. The Bishop suggested not including in the 2016 budget funds budgeted in 2015 for a planned shared Curate with Trinity Episcopal in Staunton, since that position has not materialized and is uncertain for 2016.

The Committee recommended approval of \$2950 for the purchase of a small portable digital organ requested by Ted Bickish, Music Director, with funds taken from the New Organ Fund. This organ would serve as a replacement during the two to three - month time period between dismantling of the current organ and installation of the new one. George questioned the need for a temporary replacement, since the piano would be an alternate instrument at no cost. Furthermore, there was uncertainty about projected maintenance costs for the digital organ. Tom and Sharon responded that Ted's interest in the digital organ was also its suitability for playing baroque music, and that he planned other later uses for that instrument. They also pointed out the Finance Committee's view that it would be more cost-effective to purchase the digital organ rather than continue to invest in repairs to the old one. **In view of the unanswered questions related to the purchase of the portable digital organ, Carole move and Elizabeth seconded a motion to table action on the recommendation pending Ted's attendance at the December Vestry meeting. The motion passed unanimously.**

Property: John distributed a list of Property Committee priorities, and asked Vestry members to review it for discussion at the December meeting.

Stewardship: Tom reported an update provided by Lynn Dent, Stewardship Committee Chair. Committee members contacted forty of fifty-three parishioners who had pledged last year, but not yet this year. Fourteen of these stated that they were waiting for the Vestry vote on the church name and twenty-seven said that their pledges were forthcoming. There was no information on the remaining thirteen. Anita

Ramp, Financial Secretary, had reported that the number and amounts of pledges were on par with last year, and the pledge drive was moving forward as expected.

Suggestion Box: Julia reported that the only suggestion was not to change the church name. Tom commented that the Suggestion Box has proven to be helpful, and thanked Julia for monitoring it on a regular basis. Julia added that Vestry members making announcements at Sunday workshop services is one example of action resulting from a suggestion in the box.

Program Director: Sharon reported that there are two teachers in each Sunday School class, and that the children (younger than 6th Grade) will lead the worship service on November 22nd. As an Instructive Eucharist that Sunday, the children will discuss each part of the service, in addition to serving as readers and assisting the ushers. Sharon further reported that the Wednesday afternoon programs continue to attract non R.E. Lee church members and that five to eight youth are still preparing and serving breakfast on Thursday morning. In addition, five parish youth attended a Youth Event at Phoebe Needles this past weekend, where they played impressed leadership roles. Finally, six parish women are participating in the "Living Compass" program that connects faith, wellness and holiness, looking at areas that are going well and those that need work. "Living Well for Advent: Practicing Patience With All Your Hearts, Soul and Mind" is a resource used in the program and available to all parishioners.

Old Business

Church Name:

Jim thanked Doug and the Ad Hoc Committee members for their recommendations, and the Vestry members for considering these. Jim then reviewed the voting process. After wrestling with the wording of the vote on the ballot, the Ad Hoc Committee agreed on "R.E. Lee's name will be removed from the Church's name." with the vote options as "yes" and "no." The ballots would be distributed to Vestry members and counted by the Clerk, Anna Crockett, with Keith Gibson as observer. Anna has Grigg's absentee ballot. Immediately after Anna's report of the vote outcome, Vestry members are free to read prepared statements, express reasons for their vote, feelings about discussions and thoughts about the future of the church, including reconciliation after the vote. Vestry members' written statements will become part of the record and attached to the Rector's statement to the congregation.

If there is not a supermajority for removing the name, i.e. fewer than ten "yes" votes, the Ad Hoc Committee proposed taking action that accepts the name but clarifies it with additional context drawn from discussions with parishioners on both sides that express: 1) we are an Episcopal Church; and 2) we have a history that goes back to the name that Lee knew. i.e. Grace Church. Such action might include a contextual modification of the current name to "R.E. Lee Memorial Church, founded in 1840 as Grace Church." Finally, the Ad Hoc Committee had no recommendations in the event of a super-majority vote to remove R.E. Lee's name, and discussions would continue.

After counting the votes, Anna reported nine "yes" and six "no," one vote short of a supermajority to remove Lee's name from the name of the church. Jim then asked the Vestry to consider a motion to replace the current church sign with one that reads "R.E. Lee Memorial Episcopal Church, founded in 1840 as Grace Church." George suggested separating the two components. **He further suggested an amendment to change the official name of the church, not just the name on the sign, given the inconsistencies in the church's name on publications, signs, letterhead, etc. John seconded the amended motion that passed with one "no" and one "abstention."** In terms of the proposed addition to the sign stating "founded in 1840 as Grace Church," George pointed out the historical inaccuracy since the name in 1840 was Woodville Parish, and the Grace Church building was not built until 1842, then consecrated in 1844. **Doug proposed avoiding the inaccuracy by simply separating the lines**

“Founded as Grace Church” and “1840.” The motion passed unanimously, and the Property Committee was asked to present a design for the new sign at the December Vestry meeting.

Frank, John, Don, Doug, George, and Julia read their prepared statements.

Comments by the Wardens: None

Comments by the Rector: Tom thanked the vestry for its hard work and willingness to engage in important discussions. He also reminded continuing and new Vestry members about the overnight retreat on January 15-16, 2016.

Closing Prayer: Diana offered the closing prayer.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Next Vestry Meeting:; December 21, 2015 at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Anna Crockett, Clerk