

Vestry Meeting Minutes (approved)

R.E. Lee Episcopal Church

January 26, 2015

The regular meeting of the Vestry of R.E. Lee Memorial Church was held on Monday, January 26, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall of the church.

**In Attendance:** George Brooke, John Burlison, Susan Cross, Jim Farrar, Carol Elmore, Julia Grossman, Amy Holston, Diana Kenney, Elizabeth Knapp, Holt Merchant, Don Whittington, and Anna Crockett (Clerk); **Guests:** Sharon Massie (Program Director) and Elizabeth Oliver (Finance Committee Chair) **Absent:** Doug Cumming, Grigg Mullen, Frank Settle, Daniel Wubah,

**Opening and Prayer:** Jim Farrar opened the meeting with prayer.

**Election of Wardens:** Representing the Rector, who is recovering from surgery, Sharon Massie presented the Nominating Committee's slate for nominees for Vestry officers (Jim Farrar, Senior Warden; John Burlison, Junior Warden, Michele Hentz, Treasurer; Anna Crockett, Clerk) and asked if there were additional nominees from the floor. With none offered, Vestry members unanimously elected all nominated officers. Jim and John expressed their appreciation and Jim welcomed the new Vestry members.

**Approval Of Minutes:** Holt moved to approve the minutes with the correction noted by George. Diana seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**2015 Budget:** Elizabeth Oliver, Chair of the Finance Committee, reviewed several options represented in the spreadsheet provided, and reported the Finance Committee's unanimous recommendation for Vestry approval of the option that included a 2% wage increase and 4.75% draw from investments. She explained that the profitable year in 2014 makes the 4.75% draw affordable. Nevertheless, the proposed budget shows a deficit due to two areas: 1) the \$12,000 estimated cost of an audit recommended by Best Practices every five years and 2) \$12,500 for the new budget line added for a Curate position. The proposed budget includes a \$9000 draw from investments to partially offset the audit cost.

Related to the audit, Elizabeth reported that two highly qualified new members of the Finance Committee, Megan Hess and Robert Allan, have agreed to complete an internal audit (same as an external audit) at no cost. Their services will be the same that we would get from a paid, external audit, except for the fact that we cannot count it as such because of the obvious conflict of interest. It will, however, give us more time to plan for the financing of an external audit five years from now and will prevent us from taking the \$9,000 draw from the endowment to offset the cost of the audit. This adjustment does not change the bottom line of the budget, however.

In terms of the Curate line item, Elizabeth reminded us that the proposal came out of the November meeting with Bishop Bourlakas and that under his plan three entities would share the cost of the position: the diocese would take a third of the cost along with RE Lee Episcopal (1/3) and Trinity Church in Staunton (1/3). Although the latter was not included in the Diocesan budget approved for 2015, the FC felt that this was an opportunity that we should budget for in advance, at least including a placeholder for it for the future. If not used this year, the \$12,500 will provide a pad against a deficit budget, and can be rolled over to 2016. Jim noted the importance of the discipline of this advance planning and the hope that we will ultimately have this position, which is also included in the Mutual Ministry Review.

Responding to George's question, Elizabeth reported that the pledge goal had been reached, and that there is the possibility of an additional gift of \$6000.

Carole asked whether the Curate would also serve as chaplain. Jim explained that, based on the Bishop's description, the position would be shared among RE Lee and Trinity parishes, along with the smaller churches in the diocese, making it unlikely that we could count on the Curate having time to take on chaplain responsibilities. Jim added that we need to continue documenting Canterbury expenditures, demonstrating to the diocese good use of its funding that has essentially covered the cost of our college program over the years. If the Curate replaced our chaplain position, the Diocesan contribution that has already been reduced for 2015 may be eliminated at that time. Therefore, we need to start thinking in terms of providing some of that funding in the future.

Sharon inquired whether additional funds could be requested for her budget, if needed, since it was reduced by \$50 this year. Elizabeth responded that the Finance Committee is interested in having committees live within their budgets as much as possible.

Observing that Tom has trained parishioners to lead Morning Prayer, Holt raised the possibility of saving on the cost of supply priests by periodically using lay leaders for Morning Prayer at Sunday worship.

George asked for clarification of the Choral Scholarship Fund shown in the R.E. Lee Funds Report. Unlike other funds in the report that include their description and funding source, this information is not included for the Choral Scholarship Fund. **Elizabeth will ask Anita to make this addition** and noted that one of the choral scholarships is funded from the Canterbury budget.

**Elizabeth Knapp moved for approval of the proposed budget that includes 2% wage increases and a 4.75% draw. George seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

**Suggestion Box:** Julia read a letter from Carole Woodcock describing frequent visitors to R.E. Lee Church throughout the year, and suggesting both monthly Vestry-led church tours (perhaps on Saturday morning and afternoon) and preparation of a brochure describing noteworthy features of the church. There was Vestry consensus on the value of providing information to visitors. Discussion of the suggestion included the related logistical challenges, e.g. training and

scheduling volunteers for tours, recruiting a coordinator, identifying knowledgeable non-Vestry guides, etc. John observed that Bruton Parish in Williamsburg, the diocese of Southern Virginia, adds \$60,000 to its annual budget based on long-standing contributions in their collection box located next to the church brochure. Options raised by Vestry members were a possible trial run of tours on a special occasion (e.g. Parents Weekend), self-directed tours, and notecards for Christmas featuring a church picture of special interest. Jim raised the question of where a tour program would fit in our committee structure. **He noted that work is already underway on a brochure, and that the Vestry can take this suggestion under advisement, being realistic about what it would entail.**

**Report from the Program Director:** Sharon reported that the Rector looked well when she visited him that day. Reporting on last weekend's Diocesan Council, she described the theme of becoming more missional, including the importance of going out into our communities. Videos of Council sessions are on the diocesan website. Sharon further reported the Lenten Program will be study of the book The Agile Church, and that a children's program will be offered. She concluded by announcing that she will be attending the Episcopal Formation Conference on Christian Education in Houston this week.

#### **New Business:**

**Comments from the Wardens:** Jim reported that updating the Mutual Ministry Review is at the top of his Vestry To Do list. He emphasized that the MMR is the road map from which everything will flow, such as space planning, job descriptions, preparation for emergencies, organ replacement, etc. The agenda of the upcoming Vestry retreat will include discussion of the MMR, including removal of completed action items, as well as discussion and prioritizing of remaining tasks/projects.

John distributed the list of property priorities for 2014 and 2015. He reported that Tom Contos in Washington and Lee's Planning Office has informed him of plans to renovate the red house behind the parking lot, and to replace the current stone path with a sidewalk connecting the building to the parking lot, at their cost. In exchange, W&L has requested the use of one of the existing handicapped parking spots. John presented a property map showing that part of our driveway is actually property owned by W&L, meaning that the University has been generous in allowing us to use it. Jim observed that the church has had the good fortune of a healthy and cooperative relationship with W&L over the years.

Diana reported speaking with Jane Brooke about the possibility of ECW forming a committee responsible for kitchen cleanup. Jane shared that she and Sue Denson will not be continuing as co-chairs for the bazaar, and that a bazaar may not be held next year. Since the ECW is not functional at this point and its future is uncertain, forming a kitchen committee is not realistic. Jane suggested well-placed signage in the kitchen with respectful instructions for cleaning. George noted that ECW's across the country are disbanding, likely due to the increase in women who no longer have the time and/or interest in participating in a church women's group. He further observed that, for some time at R.E. Lee, a small group of women has taken the lead in

ECW activities, and that the majority of the latter occur in the daytime, when many other women are at work. Vestry members expressed concern about the potential loss of outreach funds that the bazaar raises. Jim raised the possibility of reinvention of the ECW and consideration of other options for raising funds for outreach. He suggested conversations with the parish to discuss these questions in a more intentional way.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned 6:10. Sharon offered closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Crockett, Clerk