

St. Gregory the Great Episcopal Church
Vestry Meeting Minutes
February 18, 2023

Present: John Barrett, Stacie Court, Gail Eilers, Blaine Everson, LeAnne Krause, Nikki Mathis, Maggie Reinberger, Mark Richardson, Shelby Welch, Jeff Welch

Absent: Kate Avinger, John Bray, Anna Hiers, Lane Norton

- 1) Nikki called the meeting to order at 2:45. The first item of business was to commission the new vestry members. The second was to approve the current vestry norms, which was done unanimously.
- 2) Minutes from the meeting on January 10, 2023, distributed in advance, were approved unanimously.
- 3) Standing in for the treasurer, Les House, Jeff Welch, Chair of the Finance Committee, explained the January 2023 Treasurer's Report, which indicated that revenue for the month of January was \$30,509 over budget and expenses were \$4,022 over budget, leaving the church with an apparent overage of \$26,487. This was largely due to additional operational revenues of \$25,855 having been donated or pledged since the budget was approved in January. Jeff explained that the Finance Committee recommends that the \$25,855 be added to the 2023 budgeted revenue without any changes in the budgeted expenses. This change would reduce the overall 2023 Budget deficit from \$36,008 to \$10,153, adding that one more pledge had just come in, reducing the deficit further to \$9,058.

Given the overall budget deficit for 2023, the Finance Committee recommended that no new expenditures be made by any committees or ministries beyond what is already in their budget. A motion was approved to that effect by the vestry.
- 4) LeeAnne explained that the replacement of the roof of the Education Building, which had already been approved in theory by the vestry, had been awarded to the company Bone Dry Roofing, whose bid is for \$15,247. The vestry further approved this decision.
- 5) Nikki explained that Catherine Drewry is likely not returning as director of children's ministries. Depending on Doug Adkin's plans, we may be able to offer him Catherine's employment package.
- 6) LeeAnne Krause, 2022 junior warden, was elected as senior warden, and Mark Richardson was elected junior warden.
- 7) Nikki gave the rector's report. Church attendance has grown back to around 17-25 congregants at the 8 AM service, about 10 fewer than before COVID, and around 117 or so at the 10:30 service, down from pre-COVID attendance of 120-150 with peaks of about 200.

She reiterated the possibility that Doug Adkins might be offered a part-time position as an associate priest and director of children's ministries. Catherine Drewry's salary, which was \$24,909, would likely be the key part of the compensation package.

Nikki then explained that in the recent past the church's budget has typically been in the region of \$299,000-\$300,000, which has never been adequate to cover all the church's expenses. Frequently, extra costs have been covered by ad hoc donations. This is not great news because it means that like many churches, St. Gregory is headed in the direction of not being able to be fully supported by pledge giving—that is, not supported by the steady giving of parishioners as much as by unusual gifts whose reliability is questionable.

8) Nikki then presented her analysis of the parochial report, as follows:

- a) The church is experiencing decreasing revenue since COVID closure.
- b) Certain committees, like Parish Life, have likewise ceased to function.
- c) Attendance has been sharply up and down as waves of the pandemic arise and fade.
- d) Do we need new COVID policies in place, she asked? Probably not, especially because COVID has become less lethal even as it has become more transmissible.
- e) Nevertheless, new opportunities have presented themselves—for example, the use of guest musicians has been a notable asset.
- f) Livestreaming has been another opportunity. At least 70 online attendees view the service each week.
- g) New congregants are attending each week thanks to online “previewing.”
- h) Can or should the church become more outward looking, Nikki asked—or will we lean more into our “arts” identity?
- i) We continue to send people into discernment. Given that this is so, should we emphasize spiritual formation more than we already do?
- j) Sunday school attendance is currently at a low ebb since some people are not attending church. However, we are now averaging about five younger children in the nursery each week. If that continues, Sunday school will eventually perk up.
- k) We should celebrate our successes more—with discernment, for example. We could perhaps have a “discernment day” when we post pictures and bios of people the church has raised up to the clergy.
- l) Sacred Ground and other activities of the church have led to more diverse visitors.

9) Nikki then suggested that we may need to make changes to some of the bylaws. The first one under consideration is the timing of the annual meeting. Her suggestion was to move the meeting from January to November, allowing vestry membership to end in December with the passing year and to

reduce complications that arise from people giving in the new year, in response to issues brought up at the meeting, what was needed to close out the old year's budget. This constitutes the first mention of the change, which needs to be mentioned twice before being voted on.

10) Nikki asked the vestry to review the goals of “nourish, grow, go” online and to think and pray about the overall direction of the parish. What should we be doing? Where and how does God want us to act in the parish and in the world?

11) Nikki announced that the Trey Clegg singers, a renowned offshoot of various Atlanta choirs and members of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra chorus, will be singing at church the Sunday after Easter.

12) Finally, Nikki announced that she will be taking a 3-month sabbatical starting in May and that plans are already in place to share the preaching and celebrating.

13) The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Richardson