

# THE PARISH OF THE ADVENT

## MINUTES OF THE VESTRY

**Type:** Regular Meeting

**Date:** November 19, 2020

***Via Remote Communication***

A regular meeting of the Vestry of the Parish of the Advent was held on the nineteenth day of November, *anno Domini nostri Iesu Christi 2020*, via remote communication through Zoom, the Rector presiding.

The following thirteen members of the Vestry were present, all of whom were present at the meeting's commencement, thus constituting a quorum:

The Rev'd Douglas E. Anderson (Rector)  
Mr. Paul J. Roberts (People's Warden)  
Mr. Adam C. Rutledge (Treasurer)  
Mr. Frederick A. Ou (Clerk)  
Miss Lynda J. Blair  
Mr. John M. Boyd  
Miss Amanda W. Daley  
Mr. Thatcher L. Gearhart  
Mr. Dustin E. Henderson  
Dr. David E. Lapin  
Dr. Philip W. Le Quesne  
Mrs. Carolyn P. McDermott  
Mr. Francesco M. Piscitelli

The Rector, after ensuring that all those participating could hear each other and be heard by one another at the same time, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and offered an opening prayer.

### I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Rector presented the minutes of the last regular meeting of the Vestry, held on October 15, 2020. After review, upon motion, duly made and seconded, it was

***RESOLVED***, that the minutes of the Vestry's October 15, 2020 meeting be approved as submitted.

## **II. REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Treasurer reiterated that 2020 had been an unusual year, which could be seen in particular in two budgetary categories. The first was the Parish's plate collections to date, which were currently thirty-five percent of what had been expected, though the Treasurer noted that this was not a significant issue overall since plate collections do not represent a large proportion of the Parish's revenues. The second was Christian education, for which expenditures remained well below budget, as expected given the circumstances. The Treasurer also commented that the Parish's new billing system, which stemmed from the recommendations previously made to the Vestry by the Administration Committee, had been working very well so far.

Mr. Gearhart, Chairman of the Finance Committee, reported that the Finance Committee would be meeting on November 20, 2020, to work on the proposal for the Parish's 2021 budget, which was expected to be presented at the Vestry's December 2020 meeting. He noted that because of the current circumstances, this budget was likely to be more hypothetical than what would be desired ideally. Mr. Gearhart also echoed the Treasurer's endorsement of the Parish's new billing system, remarking that the new system allowed a much more comprehensive view of billing in real time as opposed to after the fact, which was very desirable from a financial point of view.

## **III. REPORT OF THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

Mr. Piscitelli, Chairman of the Stewardship Committee, reported that there had been an excellent response so far to the Parish's 2021 stewardship campaign. To date, seventy-one pledges had been made for 2021, representing forty-four percent of the total pledged amount for 2020. Compared to previous years, not as many new pledges had been received as would have been expected in a normal year, but this potential deficit had been offset by increases from current pledgors.

Mr. Piscitelli also was feeling encouraged by the Parish's overall stewardship situation for 2020, especially given the current circumstances, and believed that attaining a target pledge-fulfillment rate of ninety percent for 2020 was within reach. The Rector added that November pledge statements would go out to parishioners in about a week, as well as a general reminder regarding pledging for 2021.

## **IV. REPORT OF THE PROPERTY COMMITTEE**

Mrs. McDermott, Co-Chairperson of the Property Committee, reported that the Committee was focused on two projects currently. The first project was the ongoing renovation of the Parish office, which was nearly complete. Painting, flooring, and the kitchen had all been substantially finished, and only some lighting work really remained. The total cost of the renovation to date was approximately \$6,500.

The second project was evaluating the state of the Parish's kneelers. Their refurbishment had been looked into in the past, but had appeared cost-prohibitive at the time. The Property Committee was now assessing the current condition of the kneelers and what options may be available to the Parish to refurbish them, given that this is a particularly opportune time for such work since the kneelers are mostly not in use at the moment. Possibilities mentioned included doing some of the work in-house, as well as refurbishing the kneelers in stages.

## **V. REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

Dr. Lapin, Chairman of the Administration Committee, reported that the latest draft of the Parish's employee handbook, which had been circulated amongst the Vestry, had already been vetted by Anita Lichtblau, Esq., the attorney retained by the Parish to advise on its creation, as well as various Parish parties. The only issue that remained outstanding related thereto was the treatment of the Parish's part-time employees in regard to 403(b) contributions—Dr. Lapin was of the opinion that long-standing, part-time employees should be able to participate. The Rector asked those present to review the current draft and provide any comments, and a final draft was expected to be ready for review at the Vestry's December 2020 meeting. In addition, the Administration Committee was planning to conduct a review of its previous recommendations to the Vestry at year end to reassess what may be done feasibly moving forward given the current circumstances.

The People's Warden also relayed a report from Mr. James D. Singletary, Parish Administrator. Mr. Singletary reported that in addition to the progress on the renovations to the Parish office, a laptop computer had been procured for the Rector, as well as a docking station to allow the Rector to interface with the Parish's internal computer network in his office. Assessing the Parish's revised staffing structure after its implementation nearly three months ago, Mr. Singletary reported that the reduction from two to one sexton had not caused any issues so far, and that he had been very pleased with the performance of the Parish's new property manager, Mr. Richard K. Lyerla.

Regarding the Parish's financial operations, Mr. Singletary noted that the responsibilities previously handled by Ms. Kelly Walsh, who had been the Parish's Bookkeeper, had been assumed by him and Mr. Joseph Brown, the Parish's Comptroller, and that an upgrade to the Parish's church-management software may be considered in the upcoming months, which would likely result in additional labor savings. Finally, Mr. Singletary reported that the Parish should be well prepared for the upcoming winter season, with repairs having already been done to the heating system, among other appropriate measures that had been taken.

## **VI. RECTOR'S REMARKS**

The Rector remarked that he had received a letter earlier that day from the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, which had been circulated amongst the Vestry, containing updated guidelines regarding in-person worship, and that he had already met with the Rev'd David J. Thompson, Parochial Vicar, the Rev'd Dr. Jeffrey A. Hanson, Priest Associate, and Mr. Mark F. Dwyer, Organist and Choirmaster, regarding these updated Diocesan guidelines. Since the updated guidelines lowered the in-person attendance limit to twenty-five individuals, the Rector presented two options regarding Masses at the Parish moving forward.

The first option was to add more Masses on Sundays if it was concluded that in-person worship should continue. While sufficient clergy were available to implement this option if chosen, the Rector noted a number of relevant considerations. For one, the updated Diocesan guidelines strongly discourage continued in-person worship. There would also likely be logistical issues that would need to be solved if Masses were done back to back, and each Mass would likely be limited to fourteen to sixteen worshippers, meaning that it was probable that some people would need to be turned away from them due to such limit. Some of the Parish's choristers had become increasingly nervous about singing as well, which would also need to be taken into account.

The second option was to no longer have Masses open to the public at the Parish on Sundays, in which case the plan was to instead revert back to the Parish's previous arrangement of recording the Mass for broadcast purposes with a priest, limited singers, and a sermon. In addition to the overall concern of there being no Sunday Masses open to parishioners, the Rector mentioned that this option could also result in negative stewardship implications.

The Vestry discussed these options at length, and a consensus was reached that if in-person worship could continue at the Parish within the constraints of the updated Diocesan guidelines, then it should continue with the addition of any safeguards that might be appropriate. Suggestions to this effect included rotating the location of each Mass among the Parish's altars to mitigate any issues regarding proper cleaning between Masses, increasing the spacing between individuals to greater than six feet apart, and adding a vigil Mass on Saturdays. Also considered was the possibility of communicating and conferring with the Rt. Rev'd Alan M. Gates, Sixteenth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, regarding the Parish's desire and plans for in-person worship under the updated guidelines. In the end, it was decided that

no public Masses would occur at the Parish on the upcoming Sunday, November 22, given time constraints, and that an appropriate course of action would be decided upon early next week for the period thereafter.

## VII. REPORT FROM THE WARDENS

**7.1 Annual Parish Meeting.** The People's Warden reported that the Parish had received guidance from Edward Notis-McConarty, Esq., Chancellor of the Diocese, regarding the requirements for the Parish's Annual Meeting, concluding that since the Parish is not a corporation formed under Chapter 180 of the General Laws of Massachusetts, there is no applicable statutory exception to the requirement that the Parish's Annual Meeting be held in person. Consequently, since at least fifty Parish members must be present for there to be a quorum at an Annual Meeting according to the Parish's by-laws, such in-person requirement creates significant practical issues in holding an Annual Meeting as long as the current COVID-19 pandemic continues. Mr. Roberts stated that the Wardens would endeavor to come up with possible solutions to this predicament.

**7.2 Appointment of Nominating Committee.** Dr. Maria J. Denslow, Mr. Jack F. Gurnon, and Ms. Deborah R. Hanley were nominated to serve on the Parish's Nominating Committee for 2021 along with the Wardens. Upon motion, duly made and seconded, it was

**RESOLVED**, that the Parish's Nominating Committee for 2021 be constituted with Dr. Maria J. Denslow, Mr. Jack F. Gurnon, Ms. Deborah R. Hanley, and the Wardens, as members.

## VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business to consider, upon motion, duly made and seconded, the Vestry voted to adjourn the meeting, whereupon the meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

I attest that the above is a true record of the Vestry meeting held on Thursday, November 19, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

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Frederick A. Ou,  
Clerk