

Vestry Meeting Minutes  
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral  
April 16, 2024

**Attendance:** Josie Felton, Grady McCoy, Grant Wallace, Jack Harvey, Sarah Bennings, Greg Albert, Eliza Borne`, David Turner, Lara Schock, Christoph Keller, Joshua Hill, Richard Moore, Kelly Wassell and Susan Allen  
**Clergy/Staff:** Amy Meaux, Lisa Corry, Jack Dowling, Missy McCain, Kristine Barbaree, Christy Poindexter and Colin MacKnight

Dean Meaux opened the meeting with prayer at 5:34 p.m.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Jack Harvey moved that the vestry approve the minutes from the March meeting with an amendment that clarification be made around the formation of a Capital Campaign Committee in the next two years. Grant Wallace seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as amended.

### **Endowment Request**

Colin MacKnight requested that a draw be made from the music endowment for the purpose of hiring an acoustics consultant to perform a comprehensive evaluation and make recommendations as to how we can improve the sound quality in the Cathedral.

The vestry had many questions in this regard and a healthy discussion ensued.

David Turner asked if we have any information on the findings regarding a similar evaluation performed at Trinity in the 90's at the time of the last major renovation to the Cathedral. Sarah Bennings asked if consideration has been given to how we would pay for any fixes or enhancements recommended by the consultant. Sarah also asked if the consultant would be the person who would actually do the work if we were to hire someone to implement his recommendations.

Colin said that he had heard that this had been explored in the 90's, but he has not been able to find any documentation as to what the recommendations were at the time. He added that whatever might have been recommended then would most likely be antiquated today as technology has drastically changed. In regard to how we might pay for any suggested improvements, Colin pointed to the music endowment which currently sits at \$1.5 million and would allow a draw of up to \$50,000.

Colin further explained that the consultant would not necessarily be the one to do the work. Many of the fixes he may suggest could be contracted out. The consultant may suggest that we consider a digital acoustic solution. This is a technique used to artificially move sound around a space. While a comprehensive solution using the type technology would be very pricey, there may be some options along this line within reach.

Joshua Hill commented that the building does absorb a lot of sound. Unfortunately, the 100 year old structure was not built with acoustics in mind.

Grady McCoy shared that he feels it would be a disservice not to try to get as much of the music as possible out into the congregation. He has been sitting out in the nave, as opposed to in the choir stalls, for the last six weeks and has felt a big difference in his experience of the service.

Colin added that this consultant is very experienced with sacred spaces and understands the desire to identify non-invasive solutions. **Note:** *Per Dean Meaux's email to the vestry on April 3, the identified consultant is Dan Clayton, who specializes in church acoustics for traditional music programs. Mr. Clayton has consulted for numerous churches around the country, including the Cathedral of Christ the King (Atlanta); St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Rock Creek Park (Washington, DC); Church of the Redeemer (Chestnut Hill, MA); Church of the Holy Cross (NYC); and St. Martin-In-the-Fields Episcopal Church (Philadelphia).*

Christoph Keller added that it sounds like there are some low-hanging-fruit options that could be affordable. Colin agreed, adding that such options might include: caulking, sealants and strategically placed panels of glass, etc.

**MOTION:** Grant Wallace moved that we approve the use of \$6,500 from the music surplus fund to hire an acoustics consultant. Jack Harvey seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** Grant clarified that he would rather we use surplus funds for this purpose and not pull from the music endowment so that it continues to grow.

Eliza commented that she really appreciated Grady's explanation. It is exciting to her to think there is more that those sitting in the back may be missing and that making some adjustments could positively impact their worship experience.

**VOTE:** The vestry voted on the aforementioned motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **ECEP Report**

Christy Poindexter announced that ECEP has officially moved into their Hodges Hall classrooms now. The program soon will have absorbed 30 new students as a result of the recent closure of PHUMC's daycare program.

The Trinity Treasures rummage sale raised \$3,500. The playground dedication is set for this weekend. Lisa Corry will bless it, and a cookout and concert by "Mom & Pop" will follow.

The Fire Marshall is scheduled to come back and look at Higgins Hall to determine whether or not it might be possible to house children ages three and over in the building's upstairs spaces.

## **The Dean's Report**

**Garden** - Dean Meaux (Amy) reminded everyone that Friday is our second work day for the garden. There are 80 volunteers signed up, and parishioners are bringing seeded plants for the greenhouse. Our youth painted the retaining wall last weekend. Another work day is set for the Alliance Garden on April 23, and Pulaski Academy is bringing 40 students to help with that.

Amy and Christy are working to form a garden committee, and they have identified a potential new funding source, SPHINX. They also hope to start doing more in collaboration with Bethel's garden and the Dunbar Garden. Sarah Bennings inquired about how we distribute the eggs that our chickens lay, and Christy said she usually gives them to ECEP families.

**Dean in the Hot Seat** - Amy hosts a forum on Sunday mornings following vestry meetings, and the parishioners who attend are interested in learning more about our shared financial life. To that end, Amy and Melonese have discussed sending out an email to parishioners after each vestry meeting with basic financials and associated commentary as a way of getting this info out to the parish. Telling this story and how we tell it is very important so there is true transparency around the decisions being made by the vestry.

Amy is looking forward to traveling to Ottawa, Canada for the 2024 North American Cathedral Deans' Conference where she will be in community with her colleagues who are doing similar work to what we're doing at Trinity.

Trinity will host a special Earth Day Service at 6 p.m. on Monday, April 22. This is something Becky Tucker has been wanting us to do for a long time. Other planners include Lisa Corry, Lisa Thorpe and Patrician Matthews. The event is being built around the image of the feeding of the five thousand. Participants are asked to RSVP so we can get a count for dinner. Attendees are also asked to bring items from creation to present as an offering.

### **The Sub-Dean's Report**

Lisa Corry spoke about how busy this past Lenten season was leading into Easter. Lent presents many opportunities for the formation of spiritual practices. She posed the question: "What are your expectations for your relationship with God?"

She shared that there are a lot of changes happening with pastoral care, and we need to be attuned to the way change comes about. It can be sudden and intense. It can involve our health or catastrophe. We need to remember that and keep in mind that you never really know what others may be going through or dealing with.

Lisa recently enjoyed a thought-provoking book discussion on a book titled *Intentional Leadership: In Between Seasons* which focuses on management styles in religious settings. The book introduced a meaningful analogy, suggesting that some leaders are dance floor people. They lead by doing. They get out there in the middle of the dance floor and are part of the action. Others are balcony people. These leaders have more of a bird's eye view perspective. These are your big picture leaders. Watching from the balcony, they are able to see the whole dance floor.

### **Financial Report**

Grant Wallace presented the financial report for the month of March. ECEP's cash on hand decreased by \$6,724.66 which primarily can be attributed to spending about \$5,200 of the grant money that needs to be spent by the end of the year. Income is up over expenses by \$880.42 for the month as well as up by \$113.67 for the year.

Looking at the financials for the Cathedral, cash on hand decreased by \$78,234.17 in March. Expenses outpaced income in March by \$78,459.21. This is due to the payment of invoices that just came in for approximately \$31,000 worth of HVAC work performed at the end of 2023. Year to date, we are operating at a deficit of \$40,262.08. The Cathedral's investments sit at a healthy total of \$6728,013.45.

**MOTION / VOTE:** Josie Felton moved that the March financials be approved as presented. Kelly Wassell seconded the motion. The vestry unanimously approved the March financial report.

The next order of financial business involved a topic that Dean Meaux brought to the vestry via email on April 3:

*Kristine has spent some time in our Special Gifts Fund. This is an account that should hold money until the designated purpose has been accomplished (i.e. a gift for a staff member who is leaving). The fund currently has \$52,030.72. Of these monies, \$20,000 was additional gift money towards the operating fund in 2022. The rest\* is a bequest from Linda Brown's estate in 2020.*

**RECOMMENDATION:** *We use this fund to pay the Nabco bill (for the leak at 17th and Center) totaling \$22,732.19. And move the rest (\$29,298.53) to our Operating Funds.*

To that end, with the support of the finance committee, Grant recommended that we move a total of \$22,700 from these funds over to operations for the purpose of paying the NABCO bill.

**MOTION / VOTE:** Christoph Keller moved that we transfer \$22,700 from the Special Gifts Fund into operations for the purpose of paying the NABCO bill. Joshua Hill seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

Next, the vestry considered a request from a parishioner for Trinity to make a financial gift to [LifeQuest of Arkansas](#), which aims to promote healthful and active aging by providing educational classes and volunteer opportunities for senior adults in our community. Together, program participants log over 9,000 hours of volunteer work. It was noted that all of the other local Episcopal churches support this organization.

Grant noted that the Finance Committee was supportive of our making a \$1,200 gift to LifeQuest. Amy affirmed the recommendation and shared the idea that this contribution could be distinguished from funds distributed via Matthew 25 because LifeQuest is not working to meet the needs of the underserved but providing valuable support in the community via educational outreach.

Several vestry members posed questions and expressed concerns about making this type of gift. Josie asked why the other congregations support LifeQuest. Joshua questioned how much is administrative and how much goes to the actual program. Eliza offered that she is not sure that this gift would be on par with gifts of a similar amount that we give to Sewanee or Camp Mitchell (which were previously offered as comparisons).

Susan Allen reminded the group that we have discussed having a grant application process that would be helpful in distributing gifts like this as well as funds raised through efforts like *Bliss*. Josie agreed that we need to revisit this conversation.

Sarah suggested that a relationship with LifeQuest might also fall in line with components included in our Master Plan that calls on us to share our space and funds with the greater community.

Christoph asked if this parishioner is going to be upset if we don't make this gift. Amy shared that the parishioner brought the request to Melonese, and we may want to explore that with her.

Greg Albert questioned why the gift needs to be \$1,200 and why annually.

Amy commented that the fact that the vestry is engaging in such an active and intentional conversation around our budget brings her great joy!

**MOTION / VOTE:** Grant Wallace moved that we instruct Jack Dowling to reinstitute a grant committee to formalize a process for awarding funds in the community. Josie Felton seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** Christoph suggested that we forward this request to the Matthew 25 committee or that we ask the parishioner to make their request directly to Matthew 25.

**VOTE:** The vestry attempted a vote. Christoph Keller, Joshua Hill, David Turner and Sarah Bennings abstained. The consensus was that we will table this discussion for now.

## **Property Report**

Missy McCain said that six sets of electrical outlets were installed in the chancel area of the Cathedral. These outlets can be used to power the new portative organ as well as fans and other tools and electronics.

Middleton is working to install the new pipe that will connect the chiller to the Cathedral. They also started maintenance on all HVAC units. Early reports are that most of the needed repairs at this point are minor. Missy asked that they inspect these units as they would in their own homes and that they tell us everything they find wrong or problematic. Two of the units are currently frozen but can be fixed. Another unit had a gas leak which they closed off and are working to fix. Additionally, they are installing new filters in all units.

Sarah asked if Middleton can perform a life cycle analysis for the HVAC network. Missy confirmed that they are evaluating all units based on age.

Missy and Jack Dowling met with Allied to identify opportunities for savings associated with our IT network. They negotiated a solution that involves getting rid of physical servers and moving to a cloud-based network. The financial impact of this switch will be the difference between paying only \$3 per unit per month as opposed to the current rate of \$27 per unit.

Comcast is also going to set up free guest WiFi access that will be separate from the staff's WiFi network.

Lisa offered a prayer to close the meeting at 7:02 p.m. after which we briefly broke into Sub-Committees then departed for the night.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 21, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Y. Allen  
Clerk