

CHRIST CHURCH VESTRY MINUTES

November 28th, 2021

01. Call to Order

- a. The hybrid Zoom/in-person meeting was called to order at 12:00 PM

02. Opening Prayer

Fr. Will Levanway.

03. Election of New Vestry Members

- a. A Google form ballot was sent to those on Zoom and paper ballots were distributed to the members present in person. Tyler Proctor and Adam Nygren were in charge of tallying the votes. The nominees were introduced by Barbara Arthur: Susan Brooks; Karla Fowkes; Alline Ingle; and Jennifer McKinney. It was a close election, with the results being Susan Brooks, Karla Fowkes, and Jennifer McKinney.

04. Priest-in-Charge Report (See Appendix I)

- a. Fr. Will gave his report.

05. Finance Report (See Appendix II)

- a. Chip Caldwell gave an overview of the finances. He noted that 2022 will be an unusual year, because for one, on November 1st of next year, it will mark one year for the vestry, the diocese, and Fr. Will to come to an agreement about calling Fr. Will permanently; and two, there is hard work ahead getting us back to pre-COVID levels of involvement, both of which are large tasks. He said while the church is running a \$50k deficit, there is no need to panic, and the vestry and finance committee in years past agreed that could be done for three years in order to call a priest and still be financially okay. He then encouraged everyone to pledge, noting we only had 10 pledges so far, opposed to the 32 we had for 2021.
- b. Someone asked about what was going on with the property insurance, because they had heard that the church couldn't afford the insurance premiums so the vestry took a gamble on raising our deductible, and then had to pay a lot of money when the pipe burst in the Canterbury Building. Chip responded that the finance committee had weighed the pros and cons of raising the deductible from \$1k, and judged that it was worth raising it to \$10k save \$833/year. It was an unfortunate coincidence that the pipe burst so soon after raising it. The vestry has since voted to go back to the \$1k deductible. He did emphasize that insurance doesn't cover aging building problems, it's there for weather and vandalism-related damages, etc. Fr. Will noted the decision to raise the deductible was a question of "is this the best use of our funds?" not about whether we had the funds to do it or not. He also noted that we will continue to develop more opportunities for feedback and transparency in regards to new developments.
- c. Someone else noted that, regardless of how much money we have in reserves, to them it's a cause for concern that the church only has 10 pledges so far and that membership is down. Fr. Will said something that they will be touching on in Adult Ed is developing a culture of evangelism, noting he agreed that we don't want people to join for their money, we want them to join because we have something here we love and we want them to share in that.
- d. Rebecca Smith noted that she feels like the church is open more often now than it has been in a decade and asked if Fr. Will would touch on that for the people who aren't here as frequently. Fr. Will ran through

upcoming events, including Lessons & Carols and Christmas schedule, as well as the regular services and open hours he does throughout the week.

06. Receipt of Other Reports (Appendix III)

- a. Fr. Will recommended everyone read the Outreach report that had been sent out in advance.
- b. Phil Johnson gave an overview of the many topics and books they've covered in Adult Ed this year, including Romans, Acts, Daniel, Lent, and the BCP's Catechism. He said they've had steady attendance of 6-15 people, and thanked Fr. Will for leading a lot of the classes.

07. Questions Arising From Reports

- a. Fr. Will thanked everyone for showing up, for their time, attention, and the many things everyone volunteers to do.

08. Closing Prayer & Adjournment.

Fr. Will Levanway.

Meeting adjourned at 1:18 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian J. Henry

Appendix I
Fr. Will Levanway's Address

Last year when I gave this talk we didn't really know each other at all. Not really. But in the past year I do feel like we have been beginning to get to know each other, thankfully. Not as much as we might if COVID was not intervening but still some.

One of the things that I have noticed is that many of us, but not all of us, are feeling a bit anxious. We are worried and we worry. Many of us are very worried about the church, our church, this church.

What are we worried about? What are we anxious about?

I want to name some of these worries not to make us worry more but to bring forward some of the concerns that come back to me.

We are worried that nobody is going to come back.

We are worried that we are about to run out of money.

We are worried that the church will close.

And this worry, this anxiety, is evidence, I believe, of our care and our concern for our church. We worry because we care.

But as Christian people we are not called to a simple life of worry. We are called to the hard work of hope, the joyous task of hope.

You might remember that last year I spoke about one image for our church as being someone, a bit like myself, who was a little out of shape. We can think of the last year as us slowly getting off the couch, starting to walk and to run. When you do that, though, the running becomes pretty hard. We run into resistance and to pain in muscles that have not been used in a long time.

It can be a bit scary. We can start to debate if we want to run at all.

To keep running takes some hope. You see what could be and you keep going on.

As a church we must keep moving on in hope.

I want to pick up a verse I highlighted in our vestry meeting last week: Ephesians 3:20,21.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

If we have a hope, a hope that gets us past the worries, it is not a hope in our abilities so much as a hope in what God is doing through us. God is at work in Christ Church across generations and across whatever divides we might think exist.

But look, that hope is for more than we can ask or imagine. Our future, thank God, is greater than whatever it is we daydream about.

What of those worries, worries about money, about people, and about the future.

As we have heard here, we are still on firm footing with our money. \$82 up is that right? We are acting with prudence and responsibility, but also with hope, with what is ahead of us. We are far away from being without.

But look, the other two worries are the real ones. What does the future look like? Who will be there?

The only future we have is a future centered on Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is and will be the gravitational force that brings people into this church. God is the only really interesting reason to go to church. It is why people--new people--come through our doors! If we are going to have a future it is going to be in Jesus Christ. Everything we do from music to flowers to outreach points to him.

What we need if we are going to have a future and a hope is a willingness to look to Jesus. A willingness to come to church as the place where we meet him.

How do we connect to that power that is able to accomplish abundantly more than we can ask or imagine?

In our prayer and in our devotion. We meet Jesus there.

So, yes, I want us to think about evangelism and outreach and music, of course I do. But above all that I want us to know that we have a future here at Christ Church because we have a future where we are praying.

My invitation to you, my hope, in the year ahead, is that you pray for a future not just that we want but that is beyond what we can imagine.

Appendix II

Finance Report - Budget

Please contact the church office for finance reports.

Appendix III
Outreach 2021 Report

At Christ Church, Outreach finances are divided into three nearly-equal pieces.

The first two pieces are MetMin and the Chattanooga Community Kitchen. These ministries are listed individually as line-items in our parish budget.

MetMin provides financial assistance to people who are not homeless, but are struggling with past-due utility and rent bills and, without help, could easily become homeless. MetMin offers services tailored to each client's needs and has a commitment to combat homelessness and poverty, and to promote social justice. MetMin was begun at Christ Church and is now a non-profit organization in the Diocese of East

Tennessee. Located on Rossville Boulevard, MetMin serves 20 clients each day they are open. Last week they received 3000 phone calls for help.

The Chattanooga Community Kitchen also began at Christ Church and is now located on 11th Street. If you become homeless in Chattanooga—and over 4000 people are so each year—this is the place to go first, to be fed and to receive services you may need to get back on your feet. At any given time, about 1000 public school children in Chattanooga experience homelessness.

The third piece of Outreach finances is budgeted to the Outreach Committee. We support ministries suggested by our parishioners, especially those where we have active volunteers. That's been harder to do in the pandemic, but we've seen needs increasing and have met them when we can.

Here's where we've helped.

Danese Sizer asked us to support **Baby University**, a Chattanooga organization that assists expectant mothers with both prenatal care and resources to help in the early childhood years.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry asked us to send money to the two remaining Episcopal Historically Black Colleges and Universities. We chose **St. Augustine's University** in Raleigh, NC, because we looked at the university budgets and this one seemed to have more financial need.

We partnered with **Children's Nutrition Program of Haiti** when Fr. John Talbird came to Christ Church. This organization empowers women and families to break the cycle of child malnutrition in the Leogane region of Haiti. This year, in addition to Covid, the people of Haiti have experienced assassination of their president, a major earthquakes and relentless series of aftershocks, and a devastating tropical storm. The money we donate does get into the country and is used for the malnourished children through the excellent work of Dr. Anani Prosper, who you may remember from his visit to Christ Church a few years ago.

Johanna Miller pointed us toward **The Bethlehem Center**, a faith-based service organization in Alton Park. The Beth has a neighborhood food pantry, an urban garden, and a variety of programs and services that benefit people who live in that neighborhood in South Chattanooga.

Dalewood Middle School has a special place in our hearts. We began our community partnership with Dalewood when Greta Howard's friend was PTA President several years ago. This year, with our budgeted money plus parishioner donations, we've provided snacks for a student testing day, bought uniforms for the supply closet, brought snacks to the teachers the week before school started, helped out with their Halloween celebration, and some of us joined the PTA. Ray Barney attends a monthly Dalewood Zoom meeting to keep us informed of their happenings and needs.

In December we will make a donation to benefit the congregation of **Southside Abbey**, an Episcopal church without a building. Southside Abbey was formed to be a safe worship space for people who had become disillusioned with or hurt by institutionalized religion. They meet on Friday nights, everyone is welcome, and it is a come-as-you-are kind of place. Ray Barney will be delighted to tell you all about it.

In addition to our financial gifts, we collect food items for MetMin and clean empty laundry detergent bottles for **Cempa Community Care**.

Fr. John Talbird has said, "**Outreach is not something we do. Outreach is who we are.**" As a parish, we've been able to help people in need in our community and beyond, because of your pledges and generous gifts. Outreach meets on first Thursdays at 3:30 via Zoom, and you can join us via the link on our parish website calendar.