

St. Mary of the Hills  
Vestry Meeting  
February 15, 2022

Vestry Members Present: (In person) Tim Silver (Senior Warden), Patty Patella, Chip Monroe

(Via Zoom) Bob Finney (Junior Warden), Roy McCraw, Marjory Holder, Doug Galke, Faith Jones, Joe Doswell,  
Buddy Fore, Leslie Billingsley

Vestry Member Absent: Lisa Kaufmann

Others Present: Fr. Andrew Hege (Rector), Elizabeth Sudderth (Clerk),  
Amanda White (Treasurer)

Fr. Andrew called the meeting to order with prayer at 5:33pm.

Fr. Andrew shared the agenda for the meeting. Two additional items for the agenda are 1) a report from Marjory Holder on behalf of the Technology committee, and 2) a report from Roy McCraw on behalf of the Planning Giving committee.

Bob Finney made a motion with a second from Roy McCraw to accept the amended agenda.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew shared the minutes from the prior meeting.

A correction needs to be made to the minutes. Doug Galke is listed as Junior Warden rather than Bob Finney.

Marjory Holder made a motion with a second from Faith Jones to approve the minutes with the noted correction.

The Vestry approved the motion.

The Clerk will make the correction and send the updated minutes to Fr. Andrew.

Amanda White shared the Treasurers report.

Income substantially exceeded expenses last month. One reason for this is that several parishioners made their yearly pledge payment in one lump sum in January.

Amanda reported one update to the restricted accounts. Account 7117-00 shows a balance of \$1200 but that amount was distributed today to Episcopal Relief and Development.

Fr. Andrew reported 2 additional pledges have been received since the financial report for this month was prepared. The total number of pledges received including those 2 additional ones is 114. The total number of pledges received last year was 131. Fr. Andrew reported that several of his clergy colleagues are seeing a similar drop in pledges this year.

Chip Monroe made a motion to accept the Treasurers report.

Patty Patella seconded the motion.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew shared a proposed Vestry Covenant which he asked Vestry members to review and comment upon.

The covenant shared by Andrew was first developed by a Diocese in the state of Washington and has made its way through the Episcopal church. Andrew worked from that document and revised the language in some areas to tailor it specifically to our Vestry. Andrew asked for feedback from the Vestry which included:

“very helpful”

A reluctance on the part of a couple of people to agree not to bring matters to the Vestry on behalf of anonymous critics. A suggestion was made to address this concern by suggesting parishioners speak directly to Fr. Andrew about concerns which they do not wish to have brought to the Vestry without their name being used.

Andrew noted it is important for Vestry members to respect the difference between confidentiality and secrecy.

“helpful to a new Vestry member for guidance”

“a wonderful guideline”

“an excellent way of conducting our business”

“similar to what was used by a Vestry at another parish”

“would be great to share with the congregation”

Doug Galke made a motion with a second from Marjory Holder to adopt the Vestry Covenant and share it with the congregation.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew shared the yearly Parochial Report which will be submitted to the Diocese.

The report summarizes all aspects of parish activities and programs and serves as an official parish record.

Roy McCraw made a motion with a second from Faith Jones to approve the report as submitted.

The Vestry approved the motion.

The report will be submitted to the Diocese after signatures from Fr. Andrew, Elizabeth Sudderth, and Amanda White.

Fr. Andrew shared the allocations approved by the Outreach committee this month for the Vestry's endorsement:

	Episcopal Relief and Development-Kentucky Tornado Relief	
\$1,000		
	Children's Council of Watauga County-Work especially with	
	Adolescent Parents and Children	\$1,000
	Afghans4Tomorrow-ERD Referral	
\$1,000		
	Anglican Alliance Tonga-ERD Referral	
\$1,000		

Total        \$4,000

Marjory Holder made a motion with a second from Bob Finney to approve these allocations.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Marjory Holder shared an update from the Technology committee.

The equipment needed to provide a permanent upgrade for the livestream in the Sanctuary will be installed next week.

Roy McCraw shared a report from the Planned Giving committee.

The planned giving effort will provide a great addition to the outreach efforts of our parish.

The document outlining the program structure has been sent to Andrea Capua, an attorney in Boone, for her review.

The program name is "Sustaining Grace" and the roll out is scheduled for June 2022.

Fr. Andrew reported the document will come to the Vestry for review soon.

Bob Finney shared the Junior Wardens report.

An outside work day is planned for April 2 from 9:00 to 1:00 to prepare the parish grounds for the play area project. The huge pile of leaves on the east side of the property must be moved or disposed of and the pile of leaves in front of the shed also must be removed.

The play area committee has selected Carolina Play as the vendor for the play equipment. 4 Forty Four Construction is submitting a proposal to be considered as the general contractor for the project. Bob has reached out to 9 contractors (multiple attempts) and only 2 responded. After discussions about the town requirements for set back from the property line it was decided to move the southern edge of the play area away from Village Green's driveway about 3 feet. This will eliminate the need for a retaining wall and reduce the number of trees that need to be cut down. The current plan is to put a 2 foot high masonry wall topped with a 4 foot high privacy fence on the southern boundary. Shrubs or a hedge will need to be planted on the Village Green side of the fence. The committee asked parents of young children in the parish for their suggestions on the project. The committee is reviewing those suggestions as well as options for the equipment from Carolina Play and will report back to Bob their final selection on style, color, features, and size of equipment proposed.

Bob suggests the re-establishment of a church Building committee.

A Building committee was established by the parish in 1993 but has ceased to be continued in recent years. Bob suggests a Building committee consisting of 5 members chaired by the Junior Warden with 1 additional Vestry member and 3 members from the parish. The purposes of the committee would be to inspect the building on a regular basis to identify safety issues, identify renovations and or improvements necessary to meet the growing needs of the parish, identify needed repairs, and to provide corporate memory of the building.

Bob Finney made a motion with a second from Marjory Holder to re-establish a parish Building committee as described.

The Vestry approved the motion. Bob will send a request to Greta Wilson to announce the re-establishment of the committee in the weekly epistle and to ask for those interested in serving on the committee to contact Bob. Buddy Fore volunteered to serve on the committee as the other Vestry representative.

Bob met with a structural engineer from IONCON Engineering about the gap between the organ and the wall. The engineer believes the gap is due to natural expansion and contraction of the wall and that there are no structural problems. He recommended that periodic measurements be taken over the next year as a precaution. Bob and Bill Stroh have taken the first measurements and will continue to do so quarterly over the next year. The repair work on the concrete in front of the Main Street door will be done after the weather turns consistently warm. The contractor who poured the cement met with Bob and believes the problem is due to the wet weather experienced during the period the concrete was poured.

Bob and Fr. Andrew met on February 11 with Warren Bringer from the Blowing Rock community group that is developing plans to remove all cables from Main Street from St. Mary north to past the traffic light at Mellow Mushroom. The project is planned to be done next year. This would result in the need to place a utility box on church property on the corner of Chestnut and Main. The town has money in their budget to plant bushes around the box to make it less obvious. Fr. Andrew reported that there would be no disturbance to the lychgates.

Tim Silver shared the Senior Wardens report.

As relates to our parish efforts to reach young people, a few project updates:

The job advertisements for an Education Director and nursery attendants have been posted and progress is moving forward.

Work on the play space project is proceeding. We hope to have design drawings soon.

Plans are being discussed on how best to communicate to the parish the plans for the play space. A couple of meetings perhaps during the time allotted for the Rectors forum are being considered. The effort is planned not only to focus on the play space itself, but to make clear this is part of a larger effort to engage families with children in our parish life, as seen as a priority during our Holy Conversations

during the discernment process, as part of visioning documents, and long-standing concerns about our ministry to youth.

A new electronic publication, "What's Happening at St. Mary of the Hills?" debuted last month. Hopefully it will appear as a permanent fixture via email every 2 weeks to keep the congregation up to date.

Progress continues to be made on website updates. Keeping the calendar current has been a bit of a challenge but improvements continue.

Tim shared some things everyone can do to facilitate better communication:

As stated in the Vestry Covenant shared at this meeting, Vestry members are urged to bring concerns to the Vestry only from those who are willing to lend their names to the issue. This will foster open communication and make finding solutions much easier.

Tim suggests Vestry members direct parishioners with a concern to someone who can help. Either a committee chairperson or Fr. Andrew will be happy to speak with anyone with concerns. Vestry members can describe the appropriate committee and offer to reach out to the chair of the committee on the person's behalf.

Tim reminded all Vestry members to wear their Vestry lanyard.

Tim urged Vestry members to let parishioners know that they are always welcome at Vestry meetings. He also encouraged Vestry members to reach out and thank parish members who do so much to help our parish family and the community as a whole.

Fr. Andrew shared the Rectors report.

Annual personnel evaluations are underway and will be completed in the first quarter of 2022. The Christian Formation Coordinator position has been posted with the Episcopal Digital Network, the Diocese of Western North Carolina, and local online job boards. A posting for new nursery assistants has been posted with several local online job boards specific to childcare, including those at ASU.

A new Congregational Care Team is forming, under the leadership of Lynn Searfoss. The team held its first meeting on January 30 to gauge interest in particular areas. A follow up survey is forthcoming to those who attended or indicated interest; input will then be sought from the wider congregation about efforts that may be pastorally helpful in this context.

Fr. Andrew and the Senior Warden, along with staff members, have been working on ways to improve communication in our parish. Some areas to be explored are how best to identify who are our intended audiences for particular publications or mailings and where gaps in communication exist. A new quarterly newsletter is in the planning stages and will be out in early March.

Fr. Andrew announced that he and Amanda White will be leading a Rectors Forum on February 20 at 9:00 in the Parish Hall on financial stewardship beyond the annual giving campaign each Fall.

The average Sunday attendance in January was 62 with an online attendance of 8.

Fr. Andrew reminded Vestry members to write thank you notes to each person who pledged this year and to let Greta know when those notes are completed.

Fr. Andrew reported the Diocesan Leadership Day is this coming Saturday. Bob Finney will be there to represent our parish.

The Diocese has changed the training modules designed to protect children. The new modules are called Safeguarding God's Children. This training is required of all Vestry and staff. When the modules are ready for use all will take the training.

Fr. Andrew shared that Owene Courtney has completed the lay discernment process of the call to Holy Orders. Lisa Kaufmann was the Vestry liaison. The next step in this process is for Owene to serve a 4 to 5 month internship at St. James in Lenoir. The Vestry will receive regular reports from Owene on the internship.

Fr. Andrew will be offering opportunities to discuss a book, "Hanging By a Thread" by Samuel Wells during Lent.

Joe Doswell asked if Vestry members should approach parishioners who have not resumed attending worship since the pandemic.

Fr. Andrew replied that he will be dividing the parish directory among Vestry members into "shepherd groups". He is asking Vestry members to contact the members of their group to touch base and offer any needed help. When appropriate that would be a good opportunity to invite people back to worship. Joe asked Andrew to add a discussion about this topic to a future Vestry meeting.

Fr. Andrew led a devotion for the close of day.

Joe Doswell made a motion with a second from Tim Silver to adjourn the meeting at 7:08pm.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Respectfully submitted,  
Elizabeth Sudderth, Clerk of the Vestry