

St. Mary of the Hills

Vestry Minutes – April 21, 2020

Via Video Conference

Members Present: Chip Myers (Sr. Warden), Roy McCraw, Jim West, Sterling Hutcheson, Bill Furr, E.B. Springs, Doug Galke, and Crawford Cleveland

Vestry Members Absent: Amanda White (Treasurer), Lisa Kaufman, Tim Silver (Jr. Warden), Sharon Battaglia and Jane Milner

Others Present: Fr. Andrew Hege (Rector) and Elizabeth Sudderth (Clerk)

Fr. Andrew Hege called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm.

A motion to accept the agenda was made by Jim West, with a second from Bill Furr. The vestry approved the motion.

A motion to accept the minutes of the March 15th meeting was made by Chip Myers, with a second from Roy McCraw. The vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew Hege led the opening devotions from the Book of Common Prayer - “In the Early Evening.”

Fr. Andrew Hege checked in with each person as to what is going on in our lives. Responses were: missing the togetherness of our church, quiet at home, enjoying the services via Zoom, enjoys seeing Eleanor in service, Chip shared that Garland had a small fall in house and has possibly cracked ribs and is in a lot of pain and needs our prayers, scary for financial consequences, hopeful for normalcy soon, Doug’s son-in-law’s mother passed away last week and they want to participate in funeral, but worried about COVID-19, homeschooling, prayers for health care workers, Lisa is working long hours, Tim’s mother is in the hospital in Burlington and he cannot be with her, Andrew and Amanda figuring out working at their jobs and figuring out a preschool routine for Eleanor who misses her friends as we all do.

Financial Report – Where are we financially?

Fr. Andrew reported on behalf of Amanda. Parishioners continue to be generous and checks are coming in at a similar rate as in worship. Some automatic payments are coming in. Trusts and endowments down significantly as expected with the market situation.

Bill Furr made a request to ask Amanda for a statement of the difference in the value of trusts between February 29, 2020 and March 31, 2020. E. B. commented it will be a snapshot since can change daily. Chip Myers stated it was down 13% during March.

Sterling Hutcheson questioned the percentage of stocks versus bonds. Fr. Andrew Hege is not sure.

Reporting is on the Episcopal Foundation website with percentages of investment breakdown. 50-50 according to Roy McCraw. Bill Furr notes we may want to review breakdown of investment percentages.

Diocesan pledge is accurate – just how it posts.

Fr. Hege and Jim Bumgardner are paying attention to choir scholarships.

All workers are being paid including choir scholars and nursery workers. No one has been furloughed.

A question was asked about expenses for holiday parties. Fr. Andrew Hege reported this relates to Christmas receptions at church and the receipts have just come in. Also, vestry/staff gathering in January. Will budget differently this year.

Restricted accounts – basically unchanged.

Finance Committee is working on a brief description of restricted accounts. Amanda White and Fr. Andrew Hege are assisting.

Bill Furr made a motion, with a second from Chip Myers to accept the financial report. The vestry approved the motion.

Joe Raulerson and Fr. Andrew Hege attended a workshop virtually on what is available for help for the church as a small business.

PPP – Payroll Protection Program loan to be able to continue to pay staff. It would allow us to keep paying all our workers including hourly workers. So far we have paid all including singers and nursery workers.

Andrew made a proposal to move ahead with applying for \$55,974.00 loan through PPP program. This would include 75% for wages and 25% for other designated expenses. The loan would be forgiven at end of loan term. This will allow us to continue paying our employees. Andrew is worrying about being able to continue to pay staff.

The 25% designated expenses would include utilities, pension payments, insurance – other expenses could be included as well. Detailed records of how the funds are spent will be needed to justify loan forgiveness.

Our staff numbers must be maintained to meet loan forgiveness requirements. Fr. Andrew Hege does not see a problem with this. The question was raised as to whether the choir scholars and nursery workers be placed into “employee status” which would cause a change in insurance requirements. E. B. Springs states he does not think so and Crawford Cleveland agrees.

There are currently four signers on the bank accounts. Jim made a motion to authorize Fr. Andrew Hege to take the application to First Citizens. The motion was seconded by Crawford Cleveland. The vestry approved the motion.

Tour of Homes Update

E. B. Springs reported that the Executive Committee has decided there will not be a tour this year. There may be a Patron’s Party later in the year. A decision will be made in mid to late July. Several projects are being considered to raise funds:

Reach out to those who bought tickets on line last year asking for a donation and a letter to the congregation since many thousands of dollars will not be coming in. The church has 600 to 700 email addresses of those who have attended.

Loy McGill will be sending out a press release shortly and Andrew is preparing a letter to be sent to the congregation.

Cancelling now is seen as a wise decision.

E. B. Springs suggested the idea of a virtual tour (under consideration) to send with the appeal for donation to former attendees. This should be done in a secure manner.

Doug Galke and Fr. Andrew Hege are exploring security options.

Fr. Andrew Hege shared that we are eligible to apply for the Human, Hope & Hurt Grant through the Diocese.

The Rector’s discretionary Fund can be used to assist parishioners who are suffering financially.

Fr. Andrew Hege encouraged the vestry members to touch base again with their list of folks.

Check on what needs have come up since last check-in and who may need help and how can we assist.

Tour of Homes – (continued discussion) – Concern voiced as to any effort to “own” the name – Tour of Homes – registering, etc.? This is still being looked into as a copyright name.

E. B. Springs stated it should be called St. Mary of the Hills Tour of Homes.

E. B. Springs will check the Secretary of State website for guidance on this process. He feels it is worth a phone call to a copyright attorney.

Suggestions were made to check ad posters and tickets from previous tours to see what the wording was.

What would it cost to own the name? E.B. Springs and Crawford Cleveland will follow-up.

Outreach Committee Proposal - Request for \$10,000 to assist with needs due to COVID-19.

Donation of \$1,000 each to Hospitality House, Hunger & Health Coalition, F.A.R.M. Café, Blowing Rock Cares and Casting Bread. The remaining \$5,000 could be used to support these groups between now and June 30, 2020.

Sterling Hutcheson made a motion, with a second from Jim West to approve this proposal. The vestry approved the motion. Bill Furr inquired as to if this was in the 2020 budget. Fr. Andrew Hege states yes.

Jr. Warden’s Report – Jim West reported on behalf of Tim Silver.

Water in basement issue: to receive an estimate from Greene Construction this week. This issue is caused by several things: clogged downspouts, excess surface water near stairs, in close, Mary Garden catch basin clogged.

Tarheel Basement estimate on hold – comprehensive approach is needed

Would the Endowment Fund, restricted account or capital improvement holding account assist in covering cost of repairs?

Per Bill Furr - Bill Stroh’s talents need to be utilized where possible regarding ongoing maintenance.

Thanks to Jim West for shop vac on Easter Monday morning.

Sr. Warden’s Report – Chip Myers shared information which shows the name as St. Mary of the Hills Tour of Homes in 2017.

Chip Myers complemented Fr. Andrew Hege on his handling of our online worship services.

Chip Myers asked if we had seen the banner in front of the church. This was an idea of Peter Purcell’s. It has the verse John 14:27 on it. He enlisted Marjory Holder’s help and Mark Curry made the banner.

Fr. Andrew’s Report – He is checking in with the Executive Committee weekly and has a weekly conference call with the Bishop. He should hear in the next week or so about his guidance on closure and guidelines on how we will reopen.

Pastoral concerns of our parish are great right now. Fr. Andrew Hege is thinking of all of us at this time. He is learning to be a pastor “virtually” and there is lots of need.

He is working on writing a letter detailing his guiding principles during this time; our core values, etc.

He shared ways to worship now: needs to be fully participatory at home, authenticity – livestream worship vs. pre-recorded important.

How can we worship at home? How can we cultivate home worship? Communion vs. morning prayer? Different parishes are doing each.

Fr. Andrew Hege is joining with us in not being able to have communion at this time. (One reason he is livestreaming morning prayer instead of Eucharist.)

Working on resources on how to pray daily office, etc. at home.

Sunday morning is his saddest time of the week with empty church – used to be his happiest time of the week.

Restrictions for the foreseeable future? What will this look like over the next several months?

Fr. Andrew shared that he is reading a book on the 1918 flu pandemic called Pale Rider. He recommends this book.

Greta is checking voice mail and emails.

Bill is working one or two days a week at church.

Jim is planning music.

Joe is attentive to payments coming in.

Staff is staggering times in the office to avoid too much time together.

All are praying for Fr. Andrew.

Sterling Hutcheson made a motion, with a second from Jim to adjourn. The vestry passed the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Sudderth