

St. Mary of the Hills
Vestry Meeting Minutes
January 21, 2025

Vestry Members Present: (In person) Mike Austell (Senior Warden), Marshall Culp (Junior Warden), Sue Sweeting, Bob Amos, Luba Skibo, Rob Rhoads
(Via Zoom): Jill Storelli, Jim Snow, Mike Matthews, Lynn Searfoss, Michelle Curry

Vestry Member Absent: Burt Mulford

Others Present: Fr. Andrew Hege (Rector), Elizabeth Sudderth (Clerk)
(Via Zoom): Amanda White (Treasurer), Fr. Sam Tallman (Priest Associate)

Fr. Andrew called the meeting to order at 5:47pm.

Fr. Andrew requested acceptance of the meeting agenda.
Bob Amos made a motion to accept the agenda as presented.
Sue Sweeting seconded the motion.
The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew requested approval of the December meeting minutes as presented.
Sue Sweeting made a motion with a second from Bob Amos to approve the December meeting minutes as presented.
The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew led a devotion for the early evening.

Amanda White shared the Treasurer's report.
Amanda reported that the parish continues to be in a very healthy cash position. The generosity and grace of our parish once again allowed us to come out ahead in 2024.
Michelle Curry made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report.
Lynn Searfoss seconded the motion.
The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew shared the allocations endorsed by the Outreach committee this month:

Episcopal Diocese of Navajoland	\$6,000
Rise Against Hunger	\$4,100 (March 16)
Watauga Community Housing Trust	\$3,000

Total	\$13,100
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The Vestry endorsed these allocations.

Fr. Andrew reported he made a contribution from his discretionary fund for California fire relief.

Fr. Andrew shared information on the Vestry Covenant and Culture of Courtesy Covenant to help provide a framework for how we go about our work as a Vestry. He will revisit this topic next month.

Fr. Andrew led a discussion on dreaming for the year ahead. He began by asking what we have accomplished in 2024. Examples cited by Vestry members were:

- 1) A successful Tour of Homes and the embrace of leadership for the 2025 Tour
- 2) Financial support through the Tour & our Outreach committee to over 50 organizations
- 3) Approval of the Outdoor Stations of the Cross in partnership with Rumble
- 4) Adding Michael Marshall to the parish staff and reworking Lindsey Herring's position
- 5) Vacation Bible School in partnership with Rumble
- 6) Sacristy improvements
- 7) Good communication from the Junior Wardens on the status of building issues
- 8) Broadening of Christian Formation leadership; building up the body which is truly our mission
- 9) Formation offerings for a variety of ages
- 10) Holding funerals for several members who were vital members of the wider community and showing a wonderful welcoming spirit in that process
- 11) Strengthened our relationship with Rumble
- 12) Participated in leadership or representation in several areas in the Diocese
(Fr. Sam Tallman noted that there are lots of vacancies on Diocesan committees in the Mountain Deanery if someone is called to that work)

Andrew then asked what we feel called to in the year ahead. Examples cited were:

- 1) Incorporation of new members into parish life
- 2) Identifying potential new members early
- 3) More social events
- 4) Potential newcomers gathering
- 5) Outreach to young parents. We are doing good work with our children but outreach is needed to their parents
- 6) Outreach or Formation opportunities for young adults; not family oriented per se
- 7) Deepening our relationship with BRAHM
- 8) Deepening our relationship with Blowing Rock Elementary School
- 9) Outreach to our sister parishes in Watauga County; both St. Lukes, Boone and Holy Cross, Valle Crucis have interim priests as they search for their next rectors
- 10) Keep the recent Bible Studies for both Men's and Women's groups going
- 11) Get more young men involved in Men's Breakfast

Marshall Culp submitted the Junior Warden's report to the Vestry and it is available for review. Topics covered were replacement of the Lych Gate which was knocked down by a Town of Blowing Rock employee who was plowing snow from the sidewalk. Marshall

and Andrew have met with VPC Construction concerning damages. Marshall will need at least one other estimate for repairs which is in progress; the leak in the Bell Tower roof which is being addressed with VPC Construction who did the Bell Tower repairs last year. They are bringing in a special roofing contractor to assess the issues; progress on installation of gutter guards along the length of the church in the Close; 50% upfront payment has been paid to JDS Pro LLC, roofing specialists, Jason Sides (owner); retaining wall project; and snow removal.

Fr. Andrew submitted the Rector's report to the Vestry and it is available for review. Topics covered were worship updates including the new "Children in Worship", a new children's offering during the 10:10 service in which children hear the biblical story for the day in an accessible way, Christian Formation, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and the Blessing at Rumble Memorial on Sunday, February 16 at 12 noon of their newly restored Ben Long frescoes.

2024 End of Year Facts & Figures from Fr. Andrew's report:

- 203 Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist
- 264 Daily Offices (Morning/Evening Prayer)
- 159-Average Sunday Attendance
- 8 Baptisms
- 4 Weddings
- 5 Burials

Fr. Andrew discussed the parish interest in the Springhaven Inn, which has been for sale. The property is currently off the market while BRAHM, Rumble, and St. Mary's all evaluate the feasibility and interest of how that building and grounds might best be used. Ideas include a multi-use community space perhaps funded by both public and private money. Many ideas are currently being discussed. More to come.

Andrew also expressed an idea that the parish become involved in some way in helping to fill a need in assisting with online school when it is not possible for students to get to Blowing Rock School due to inclement weather. This idea just occurred to Andrew and he is reaching out to the appropriate folks in the school system and wanted to put the idea out for Vestry to think about to see if there is a way for us to be of help in this way.

Fr. Andrew shared some pastoral updates. Joe Doswell is ill and would appreciate our prayers; he has been worshipping online on Sundays. Jim Snow just lost his brother; please pray for Joe and his family.

Mike Austell made a motion with a second from Jill Storelli to adjourn the meeting at 7:25pm. The Vestry approved the motion.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Sudderth, Clerk of the Vestry

