

St. Mary of the Hills
Vestry Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2022

Vestry Members Present (In person): Doug Galke, Marjory Holder, Chip
Monroe

(Via Zoom): Tim Silver (Senior Warden), Bob
Finney (Junior Warden), Buddy Fore,
Roy McCraw, Patty Patella, Joe Doswell,
Lisa Kaufmann, Faith Jones

Vestry Member Absent: Leslie Billingsley

Others Present: Fr. Andrew Hege (Rector), Elizabeth Sudderth (Clerk),
Mike Austell (Vestry Member-Elect)

Fr. Andrew called the meeting to order at 5:34pm.

Fr. Andrew requested acceptance of the meeting agenda.
Marjory Holder made a motion to accept the meeting agenda.
Lisa Kaufmann seconded the motion.
The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew requested approval of the October meeting minutes.
It was noted that one typographical error needs to be corrected. In the
sentence requesting acceptance of the meeting agenda, the (F) was left off
Fr. Andrew. The clerk will make the correction and send corrected minutes
to Fr. Andrew.

Doug Galke made a motion to approve the minutes with the noted
correction.

Patty Patella seconded the motion.
The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew shared the Treasurer's report for Amanda White.

YTD we have received 82% of pledge payments; we are on track based on last year at this time. December is a strong month for pledge payments to come in.

Actions forthcoming: Joe Raulerson will fund Restricted Fund 7128-00 Sabbatical Funds Holding for 2022, will remove Restricted Fund 7122-22 Bill Stroh Purse and will fund Program (in budget) 4866-02 College Ministry of \$2,500 for 2022.

Bob Finney brought the question to the Vestry of what to do with surplus funds on hand at the end of the year. Doug Galke commented that he agreed that he would also like to see some of the reserve/surplus funds allocated to a specific purpose at the end of the year. One suggestion was for those funds to be transferred to the capital fund. The Executive Committee needs to discuss this issue and explore options. Fr. Andrew will request the Executive Committee do that.

Marjory Holder made a motion with a second to accept the Treasurer's report.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew reported he sent a letter to Jim Runyon to engage with him to do the 2023 church audit. Mr. Runyon estimated the cost of the 2023 audit will be similar to the last audit (\$3,000). Fr. Andrew suggested a motion to approve hiring Mr. Runyon to conduct the audit for 2023.

Marjory Holder made a motion to approve the hiring of Jim Runyon to again do our yearly church audit at a cost of around \$3,000.

Roy McCraw seconded the motion.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew shared a stewardship update.

We are currently in the ballpark of where we were in pledge numbers at the November meeting last year.

One Vestry member told Andrew they have not received a stewardship letter. Andrew will check with Greta. There may be an address issue. Fr. Andrew noted that pledges have not been received yet from 5 Vestry members. He asked all Vestry members to please send in their pledges as soon as possible.

Fr. Andrew has done some research on where we are in annual giving in relation to the wider church. What he has found encouraged him on where we stand compared to other parishes.

Follow up letters will go out shortly to those who pledged last year who we have not heard from this year.

Fr. Andrew shared the proposed draft budget for 2023.

He encouraged Vestry members to go over this document line by line and to contact Fr. Andrew or any member of the Finance committee with questions, comments, and feedback.

An idea was suggested by a Vestry member that some funds be put into short-term T-bills, etc. to raise interest income vs. just sitting in a checking account.

Another suggestion was to host programs for the congregation involving speakers, etc. that will help to spark interest in the community and grow the parish; could we put some funds toward this goal? Can we do some research on how parishes grow their numbers?

Fr. Andrew again encouraged everyone to offer suggestions and ideas to any member of the Finance committee, the wardens, or Fr. Andrew.

A member asked if the Vestry could get the budget worksheet earlier next month; perhaps a week prior to the next Vestry meeting. Andrew stated he will make that happen.

Fr. Andrew shared the allocations approved by the Outreach committee this month.

Blowing Rock Cares \$1,000

To help pay for fresh produce-the committee noted the produce is purchased through High Country Food Hub

Compassion International \$ 230

To provide birthday and Christmas gifts for the little boy our parish is helping to sponsor and to provide gifts for his family

Marjory Holder made a motion to endorse these allocations.

Tim Silver seconded the motion.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Bob Finney shared the Junior Warden's report.

Work is progressing on the Play Space. Carolina Play needs 2 to 3 consecutive days of dry weather with temperatures above 32 degrees to finish their work. Given the forecast that may be a couple of weeks away. Mike Northern still needs to build the rock wall on the north and west side, and install the fence on the south side (with a fence drain on the outside of the masonry wall that will support the fence). Bob anticipates the work will continue into December.

The reserve study has been completed and shared with the Vestry with special thanks to Ron Armstrong and Joe Doswell for their help. The study outlines anticipated costs for new projects, replacement of existing equipment and major items such as a roof. Bob recommends looking at the "cash flow timeline" worksheet. That will show how much will be available in each year after anticipated projects have been completed. Also, he recommends looking at the "input variables" worksheet to see anticipated variables of inflation, projected growth of investments, and the addition of \$100/month to the capital fund. Also review the "exterior items" and "interior items" worksheets to see what is included and what has not been included. The worksheet does not address anticipated costs for items below \$5,000.

It should be noted that these are anticipated costs. It may not be necessary to spend funds for a particular item in the identified year. Some equipment (e.g., HVAC units) may be still working just fine after they reach their anticipated life expectancy. Some items may need to be replaced early due to damage or equipment failure. As can be seen from the "cashflow timeline" worksheet, with only an investment of \$100 per month we should have enough funds in the capital account until the year 2043 with no other source of funds identified.

At the request of Fr. Andrew, Bob and his committee have developed a policy for accepting items given as gifts to the church. Various items such as artwork are given occasionally to the parish. These items are received unsolicited and either end up being placed for display or stored and perhaps forgotten. The decision to accept these items has usually been made by the Rector.

The proposed policy for acceptance of such gifts states:

The Rector and Senior Warden will select a committee consisting of 3 people to review all items donated to the church and

make a recommendation to the Rector to accept the donation or not. The select committee will include 1 Vestry member, 1 member from ECW, and 1 member from the Men's Breakfast group. The Rector shall be an ex officio member of the committee. Duration of membership should be 3 years with the initial period varying to allow continuity of the committee.

Decision to keep donated items should be based on the quality of the object and that it has a connection to St. Mary of the Hills

Episcopal Church. If an item is accepted by the Rector, a receipt shall be given to the donator with a note that St. Mary of the

Hills may dispose of the item in the future. A log of donated items shall be maintained by the Parish Secretary.

The committee will also recommend an existing item to be removed and be replaced by a new item. The select committee

would recommend that items that are not kept should be given to a thrift shop, consignment store, trashed, or if truly of

exceptional quality be kept for sale by Timeless Treasures during the annual Tour of Homes. The committee will consult

with other church committees as appropriate for the donated item, such as Music committee, Grounds committee, etc.

If an item will not be kept by St. Mary of the Hills, the committee should try to contact a family member who donated the

item and inform them of the committee's decision.

Bob proposes this policy be approved and adopted by the Vestry.

Crisis Management Plan: The plan has been completed and a final draft (Bob sent to Vestry members to review prior to this meeting) is submitted for Vestry review and approval. Special thanks to those who worked with him to develop the plan: Joe Doswell, Rob Rhoads, Michelle Curry, Sue Sweeting, Olivia Knight, Jim Brooks, and Lindsey Herring. Their input, corrections, and suggestions were invaluable. The plan focuses on preparing for a crisis (medical emergency, fire, bomb threat, tornado or other severe weather), our response to such an emergency, and our recovery from the event. It is intended as a living document which is meant to be reviewed annually and updated as needed. The plan still needs some work: 1) Table of Contents 2) List of Important Phone Numbers, and 3) some formatting improvements.

Bob proposes the Vestry review the plan document and make any corrections, suggestions, or improvements by December 1 with the goal of approving the plan document at the December Vestry meeting.

The Grounds committee met in early November to discuss various issues. Despite the efforts to save the Hemlock tree on the Northwest corner of the church, it does not appear it can be saved. It needs to be removed after the first of the year when the new budget has been approved. Funds have been requested in the proposed budget for removal of the tree. It is recommended that it not be replaced. We will have lost 3 trees in the past 3 years. The committee recommends that one new tree be planted in the front of the church where the previous oak tree stood. The committee recommends after research that a Redbud tree would be the best choice. The trees are readily available, well suited to grow in our area, easy to care for and provide color during 3 seasons of the year. The trees can grow to a height of 15-35 feet with a canopy of about 20-25 feet. They are disease resistant and native to our area. The committee plans to talk to various nurseries in the area to obtain prices for a tree of about 6-8 feet in height. The tree will be planted in the spring. The existing Rhododendron bushes will have to be trimmed back to provide sufficient room for the new tree to grow.

The Grounds committee has been discussing plants for around the Play Space. The town code requires a tree/shrubbery "fence" between the planned privacy fence and the driveway for the Village Green Condos. This is an area of about 3-4 foot wide. They have identified plants for that area: Golden Fernspray Hinoki Cypress, a tree that grows to a height of 6 ft. with a diameter of about 3 ft., and an Art Boe tree which grows to about 10-15 ft. tall and about 3-4 ft. in diameter. They will contact various nurseries to determine price, availability, and suitability for the area. They should have a recommendation by the January Vestry meeting.

The committee has also discussed plans for the flower bed in front of the church. This flower bed contains various ferns and other plants which have crowded out many of the surrounding plants. The fern roots need to be cleared out before anything new can be planted in this bed which means we need a tractor with a claw or a large rotor tiller to do the work. The committee believes a 2 ft. stone wall should be placed along the lower edge of the bed to help control erosion and provide a better break with the grass in front of the bed and a stone wall would also fit with the look of the

church. The committee does not know what perennials may return. They are planning on waiting to see what bulbs appear in the spring prior to making a final plan for this bed. One idea the committee has is to place some sort of Anglican symbol in the flower bed such as a 5-6 ft. high stone Celtic Cross. The budget will determine these plans.

The stone wall along the sidewalk next to Main St. is badly damaged and needs to be rebuilt. The committee recommends postponing this project until the town completes their work on Main St. which includes replacing water and sewer lines and burying utility cables. We can anticipate additional damage. The church might get some money to help repair the wall. This project will be revisited in 2024 or later.

The HVAC units on the northwest corner of the building are an eyesore. The committee plans to investigate putting a fence or lattice work on 2 sides of the equipment to hide it from view.

Tim Silver shared the Senior Warden's report.

Regarding the research he has done on solar panels, Eagle Solar's study shows that a complete solar system (that is one that would provide electricity for all our needs) is neither feasible nor cost effective at this time. The diagram the company provided is available for the Vestry to review on Google Drive. The outline of the church roof, with proposed solar panels, is shaded in the report in purple and orange. In short, bright orange is good solar exposure; bright purple is not. Eagle Solar predicts a total yield of 873 Kwh/Kwp. At a minimum, they like to see 1200 Kwh/Kwp, so putting panels on the roof around the Close is just not practical. We could do it as a statement. The cost would be about \$70,000 but estimates suggest that the system would take at least 15 years to pay for itself.

However, Eagle Solar suggested two other options. 1) We can explore the possibility of installing solar panels on one small section of the Close roof (the small section between the foyer and parish hall that has the most orange). That would suffice for a statement of our commitment to Creation care and provide us with some electrical power. Tim has asked Eagle to explore this and he is waiting to hear back from them with costs, etc. 2) There are plenty of congregations/parishes, Episcopal and otherwise, in the eastern part of the state that have ideal locations and roof exposure for solar power but lack sufficient funds for a down payment on a system. It might be that we could help one of those churches with funding. This would

have to be investigated thoroughly, so that we know exactly what is involved, what our responsibilities/liabilities would be, etc. Tim will keep the Vestry informed as things move forward, but for now, he does not see us installing a complete solar system at St. Mary's.

Rise Against Hunger: It was wonderful to see so many St. Mary folks turn out for the Rise Against Hunger effort held at Blowing Rock School on November 6. We packed over 20,000 meals along with many other folks from the community and put them onto trucks for shipping. It was a wonderful event.

Diocesan Convention: Tim reported it was his pleasure to represent (along with Patty Patella, Fr. Sam Tallman, and Fr. Andrew) our parish at the Diocesan Convention, November 11-13. They drove to Asheville in a near-blinding rainstorm, but the 100th Anniversary Convention was well worth the effort. Tim is convinced after hearing Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's "non-sermon" that we could not have a better leader at this point in the church's history. He is a national treasure.

Patty Patella noted the Convention is available for viewing on the Diocesan Convention website.

Fr. Andrew shared the Rector's report.

The Burial Eucharist for The Rev'd Robert McCloskey (Rector, 1976-82) will be held on Friday, November 18 at 10:30am.

Baptisms will be celebrated on Sunday, November 20 at the 10:10 Eucharist.

Several Advent offerings will be available. Details are posted in various areas around the church, online, and will appear in upcoming communications.

Christmas Eve/Day Worship Schedule:

December 24	5:00pm	Holy Eucharist with Children's Pageant
	10:00pm	Holy Eucharist with Choir (incense will be used)

December 25	11:00am	Holy Eucharist with Hymns
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January 1	8:00am and 10:10am	Normal Sunday Worship
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Schedule

More Than Enough Annual Giving Campaign: As of today, November 13, we have received 73 pledges totaling \$309,529. A follow-up letter will go

out this week to those who pledged in 2022 but have not yet pledged for 2023.

Important Dates Upcoming:

Sunday, November 27 in Parish Hall, 9:00am	First Sunday of Advent: Advent Kick-Off
Sunday, December 4	Advent Lessons and Carols, 3:00pm
Tuesday, December 20	Next Vestry Meeting, 5:30pm
Wednesday, December 21	Advent Service of Hope and Light, 6:00pm at Faithbridge UMC (a joint offering of St. Mary's, Rumple Presbyterian, and Faithbridge)

Average Sunday Attendance thru November 13:	105
Average Sunday Attendance since July 1:	116
Holy Eucharists offered YTD:	179
Daily Offices offered YTD:	212

Andrew also shared that we will be hearing more in the future about Bishop Curry's "non-sermon" at the Convention, in which he spoke of "going deep" into the well of our faith and resisting the urge to be shallow in our faith.

Marjory Holder made a motion with a second from Lisa Kaufmann to adjourn the meeting at 7:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Sudderth, Clerk of the Vestry