

St. Mary of the Hills  
Vestry Minutes, January 19, 2021  
Via Video Conference

Members Present: Tim Silver (Sr. Warden), Doug Galke (Jr. Warden), Sterling Hutcheson, Jim West, Patty Patella, Chip Monroe, Marjory Holder, E. B. Springs, Roy McCraw, Faith Jones

Members Absent: Lisa Kaufmann, Gigi Poole

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

Fr. Andrew opened the meeting with prayer at 5:45pm.

E.B. Springs made a motion to accept the meeting agenda as presented by Fr. Andrew. Jim West seconded the motion.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Marjory Holder made a motion with a second from Sterling Hutcheson to accept the minutes from the previous Vestry meeting as presented.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew reported that both the documents discussed at last month's meeting which required the signature of the Clerk were signed and returned to the parish office.

Leadership Check In:

Fr. Andrew asked those present to share where they have experienced God's grace recently. Some examples shared were: the opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, seeing the grace and generosity of spirit and time of volunteers working to provide that vaccine, a beautiful snowfall, a relaxing trip to Blowing Rock from Florida, the peacefulness of the church after the Christmas service, the hopefulness of seeing our nation's leaders come together to certify the presidential election after violence.

Fr. Andrew shared an update on the status of parish activities as relates to the pandemic. Per the Diocese, expansion of in-person activities is still suspended through at least January 31. Fr. Andrew continues to talk with colleagues and research ways to collaborate on programs or worship. He would love to offer outdoor worship options during Lent dependent on weather. This is pending and will be shared as soon as possible. Andrew noted the number of people in the sanctuary during Sunday morning service has been reduced to no more than 4 or 5 in order to limit personal contact.

Fr. Andrew updated the Vestry on the status of the stewardship effort. As of today, 129 pledges have been received totaling \$464, 401. The average pledge amount is \$3600 and the median pledge is \$2000. 64 pledges were made online and 65 were mailed in or dropped off at the parish office. The number of pledges received thus far is the third highest on record and the total pledged amount is the second highest on record.

Amanda White shared the Treasurer's report.

The financial report was shared with Vestry members prior to the meeting for their review.

Amanda reminded the Vestry that the finance committee will begin the process of researching the history and structure of use for all restricted accounts so that Vestry members have a clear understanding of the purpose of each one.

Amanda reported the financial position of the parish continues to be very healthy. She noted that 97% of 2020 pledges have been collected to date totaling \$464, 534.

Amanda shared that restricted account 7128-00 was added per the auditor's recommendation. Funds in this account are being set aside towards a sabbatical for Fr. Andrew.

A question was asked by a Vestry member: What is the purpose of restricted account 7120-20 (Vestry Restricted)? Amanda stated the purpose of that account is unclear. As noted earlier the finance committee is working to clarify the purpose and function of all restricted accounts.

Amanda noted that there are some restricted accounts which have not been used for at least 5 years.

A Vestry member asked what is the purpose of restricted account 7112-00 (Memorials Restricted)? Fr. Andrew answered the funds in this account are used as they build up over time to purchase items for worship such as new vestments and new Altar appointments.

Roy McCraw reported the capitalizing of the organ was completed as described at the previous Vestry meeting at the suggestion of the auditor. Roy McCraw made a motion with a second from Marjory Holder to accept the Treasurer's report as presented.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew noted that the financial policy and procedure manual developed by the finance committee and the work on detailing the restricted accounts will be on the agenda at an upcoming Vestry meeting.

Doug Galke shared the Junior Warden's report.

Doug thanked the previous Junior Warden, Tim Silver, for his help in passing along information on pending issues or projects.

The repair needed to the concrete walkway is pending as he is waiting on an estimate from 4FortyFour construction. This is a potential hazard which could lead to someone tripping and falling. Doug will follow up to get the estimate. The same company is also preparing an estimate on further repairs for the leak in the bell tower if needed. The bell tower is currently dry but a long-term solution to the leak issue is still needed.

Doug reported the trees on the parish property are all in acceptable condition. The white pines next to the parish hall will need attention in the near term. A long-range landscape plan is under consideration to look at potential landscape work on the property. After the large tree fell in front of the church in September 2018 church leaders felt it was a good idea to check all the trees on the property and to assess their stability and to address any issues. A church member shared the name of a landscape architect in Greensboro (Laura Holtzapple at Greenworks) who has done landscape work for other parishes in Western North Carolina. Tim had contacted that company and they are interested in potentially working with our parish. Doug will follow up with that company as needed. Doug encouraged any Vestry member who knows of a good landscape company to share their name with Doug and he may contact them as well for their input. This is an effort which will most likely be worked on in the future by a parish landscape committee.

Doug shared that there was a small leak in the sanctuary on January 10. On that day we had 6 to 8 inches of snow on the roof and that most likely was the cause. Two buckets were placed and only captured a few drops of water. Doug contacted 4FortyFour to check on this issue. A question was asked as to the age of the roof. Marjory Holder stated she believes the roof was replaced about 15 years ago. Fr. Andrew will pull receipts for that project to determine the exact date.

Doug reported that Skyline Skybest made a site visit to the church on January 15 and has prepared 2 proposals to upgrade our internet service as well as a possible upgrade of the phone system. The goal in making a change is to upgrade service and spend less if possible.

The first proposal involves transfer of internet and phone lines dedicated for the elevator, fire department, and fax. This proposal would substantially increase internet speed and reduce our cost by approximately \$85 per month. Doug notes he has received positive recommendations on the service quality of Skybest.

The second proposal involves transferring all voice lines. This proposal would increase the monthly cost from our current services with Spectrum and would involve significant one-time equipment purchases or entering into an equipment lease arrangement that would be in addition to the base service cost.

Fr. Andrew noted that a change in service involving either proposal would not require Vestry approval.

At this time Doug reported the executive committee has deferred a decision on these proposals.

Tim Silver shared the Senior Warden's report.

Tim shared his gratitude to Doug for his willingness to assume the role of Junior Warden-especially in light of the new leak in the sanctuary!

Tim asked for feedback and suggestions from Vestry members and encouraged everyone to contact him at any time if he can be of help or to share issues or concerns.

Fr. Andrew shared the Rector's report.

During Lent Fr. Andrew will be leading a book study on "Beautiful and Terrible Things: A Christian Struggle with Suffering, Grief and Hope" by

Christian Brady, Ph.D, an Episcopal priest. Fr. Andrew is currently leading a four-week study of “Love is the Way” by Bishop Michael Curry with 18 parishioners.

Andrew is working on a Lenten project for families with activities for all ages. A letter will be sent out to parishioners soon with details on this project and other Lenten plans.

Fr. Andrew reported he has been conducting the annual staff performance reviews. He also shared the staff email accounts will be switching email hosts soon. The email addresses will remain the same.

Andrew shared some of his personal daily practices with Vestry members. These include praying the daily office at which time he specifically prays for Vestry members, and one hour of daily reading (both fiction and non-fiction).

Andrew is off on Mondays. This is the day each week he is consistently away from the parish. He does check email on Mondays at his customary times of early morning and late afternoon. He encourages all Vestry members and parishioners not to hesitate to contact him via phone or text message in the event of a pastoral emergency, no matter the day.

Fr. Andrew reflected on the challenging times we are living through in our common lives, both individually and as a parish family, as well as in our national life. He noted we are strengthened by our common bond of prayer and by seeking the good in each other. He encouraged Vestry members to continue to check in with the list of parishioners he has assigned to them and to share any pastoral concerns with him. He suggested doing this ideally every 4 to 6 weeks. He will ask Greta to redistribute the lists to all Vestry members.

The Vestry shared an evening devotion to close the meeting.

Marjory Holder made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:54pm with a second from Tim Silver.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Respectfully submitted,  
Elizabeth Sudderth  
Clerk of the Vestry

